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CARSON, THE GUIDE;

OR,

PERILS OF THE FRONTIER.

BY LIEUT. J. H. RANDOLPH.

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CARSON, THE GUIDE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HAND-TO-HAND ENCOUNTER.

"Keep close under the bank, Kit, and handle that 'ere paddle as quiet as you know how, fur them infarnal Apaches are as sharp with their ears as with their eyes."

"Can you hear a ripple?" inquired the young man, turning his head, and speaking with a smile, and with a low whisper.

"No; but fur all that——hanguation?"

Something was heard dropping through the branches overhead, and the next instant, an enormous snake, spotted, looped and writhing, fell into the canoe directly between the two hunters, who, well aware of its deadly nature, instantly recoiled, while young Kit Carson, with a dextrous blow of his paddle, crushed the glittering head, and then flung it out of the boat, into the clear water, where the writhing knot instantly sank out of sight.

"I'd rather have an Apache or Comanche drop down on my head, than one of them infarnal little wriggling re-tyles," muttered Buck Backram, "it allers sent a chill over me, when I fust sot eyes on 'em."

"I never fancied any kind of snake," said Carson, again cautiously dipping his paddle in the stream. But the old trapper raised his hand and motioned for him to keep still.

"Don't you do it; the danger is closer than you think."

Kit Carson looked inquiringly at the trapper. The latter replied, in his characteristic manner by asking.

"Did ye observe that that 'ere snake was purty nigh cut in two, when it flapped down in the canoe?"

"I noticed that it was after I got through with it."

"The reason that it dropped down was 'cause it couldn't keep twisted 'round the limb. It was one of them infarnal squirricks, a thousand times worse than a moccasin snake, one touch of its needle of a tongue, and it's the last of a fellow. Now, what I want to ax is what wounded it in that 'ere style."

"Some bird I s'pose."

"Not much."

"What was it then?"

"An Injin fired at it."

"But we heard no gun."

"Of course not. It was an Apache arrow that clipped through that 'ere reptyle."

Young Carson's eyes sparkled.

"Ah! I see what you are coming at. There are Apaches near us."

"Yes; indeed. They're in the trees, so nigh where that squirrik was twisted around his limb, that one of 'em has sent his arrow after it."

As if in confirmation of the assertion of Buck, another clipping of the bushes was heard, and a long, sharp-pointed Indian arrow cut its way through the bushes overhead and striking the centre of the canoe, it stuck fast, with the shaft pointing perpendicularly upward.

"We are discovered!" whispered the startled Carson.

"No, we are not," was the cautious reply, as the old trapper lowered his head, "but we are infarnally near it."

Their situation had become critical indeed. Peril was on every hand, and Buck silently signalled for the young scout to cease the paddle. The canoe was so far beneath the undergrowth, that its progress was chiefly caused by Buck Buckram pulling it forward by means of the twig and limbs.

But all motion now ceased, and the hunters could only wait, in the hope that the danger would pass by without discovering them.

The two listened, but all was still. The deep silence was no evidence that there were no Indians in the immediate vicinity. On the contrary it was more than probable that they were near enough to hear their words unless uttered with the greatest caution.

Some fifteen minutes passed in this manner, when Buck Buckram said in the same cautious manner.

"We'll rackenoyter a bit; you go down stream and I'll go up."

The suggestion was carried out at once. Kit Carson, who had hardly reached his manhood, crept over the bow of the small Indian canoe, while the old trapper as cautiously made his way over the stern.

The undergrowth here was thick and luxuriant, and the two men separated almost at the moment of touching land. They were on their way to join a party of hunters some miles to the south, and in order to reach them in time, had taken this short cut through the very centre of the country of the Jicarilla Apaches, one of the most treacherous tribes of the south-west.

Kit Carson, although young in years, had seen a great deal of such service as this, having left his native state of Missouri when but a mere boy; and he now entered upon his reconnoissance, with something of the zest of the experienced hunter, when he takes up the trail of his fleeing game.

While some distance away, they had detected the smoke of the Apache camp-fires, and Buck Buckram had halted with the intention of leaving the canoe and taking it overland; but Carson had asked that they might run the gauntlet, and the old trapper consented, remarking at the same time that he would get all that he desired of that business before the thing was finished.

When Carson found himself alone, without the guidance of the veteran hunter, something like hesitation took possession of him for a few moments, and he felt as though he

were venturing upon a task to which he might find himself unequal ; but the feeling quickly passed away, and he, compressed his lips and moved with the determination to "do or die."

Carson had gone a hundred yards or so in this manner, when he observed that he was creeping across a sort of path, slightly indented, but the marks of which showed that it had been worn by the passage of human feet.

The young hunter paused in a crouching position, and was speculating upon the meaning of this, when a slight hissing noise caught his ear, and he turned his head, expecting to see some poisonous snake at his elbow. On the contrary he discovered a tall, hideous looking Apache, who had started back in surprise, when less than a dozen feet intervened between them.

It may be doubted whose amazement was the greatest, the Indian's or the white man's. The latter was trailing his rifle with his left hand ; he softly reached backward until he felt it rest upon the handle of his knife.

The Apache held a gourd-like vessel in his hand, and evidently was on his way to the river, when he discovered this unexpected obstacle in his path.

As the vessel would be of little use to him in a hand-to-hand encounter, the savage, as soon as he had recovered from his momentary surprise, let it fall to the ground and also placed his hand upon his knife.

The red-skin had no gun with him, which was a fortunate thing for Kit Carson, as instead of hearing that warning hissing noise, which had apprized him of his danger, the first sound would have been the crack of the rifle, followed by the crashing of the bullet through his vitals.

Matters could not remain thus stationary for any time. If the Apache retreated to camp he would bring a dozen of his companions, and encompass the destruction of both Carson and his friend, while, if he advanced the collision would be inevitable.

But the redskin had no intention of retreating. Whatever may be said of the Apaches, it cannot be denied that

they are a brave people, and the one of which we are speaking hesitated only long enough to comprehend his situation, when he whipped out his knife and moved cautiously forward.

As he advanced, he gave the same peculiar hissing noise, which is sometimes heard when the Spaniard signals to a friend close at hand, and which to young Kit Carson resembled the noise of an enormous snake when closing upon its victim. He held a long glittering knife in his right hand, and every muscle was braced for the encounter.

Kit Carson, the moment he detected the design of the Apache, instantly straightened up, with his hunting knife grasped in his right hand, and stood ready to receive his deadly enemy.

The latter stole as noiselessly forward as a creeping panther. Every now and then, he gave utterance to that curious hissing sound, while his black eyes had an evil glitter like that of some furious wild beast.

When about a half dozen feet intervened, the Apache halted, as if to determine precisely how to make his attack. It required but a moment to decide. Crouching still more, he made a leap forward, and the next moment the two met in the fatal hand-to-hand encounter.

The struggle was short and desperate. Both men were very active, and they dodged each other's blows and rolled over and over upon the ground, striking and endeavoring to injure each other in every way possible. The Apache was the oldest, and for a time, it looked as if victory was with him; but Carson, although below the medium in stature, possessed prodigious power and activity, and gained the advantage of the first really really injurious blow, he striking the right arm of the redskin with such force as partially to disable it.

Following up the advantage thus gained, he plied his blows with such skill and strength that the Apache showed evident signs of weakness. Carson gave him no rest, and when opportunity offered, he plunged his knife to the hilt in the breast of the redskin, who with a gasp and a groan gave up the ghost.

One thing was remarkable in this hand-to-hand encounter, and that was the silence with which it had been conducted. The Apache had it in his power at any moment, by a single cutty, to bring half a score of his comrades to his help, and yet he forebore to call them, but "fought it out on that line," although it took his life.

Kit Carson's first proceeding upon rising from the ground was to look about him, and see whether any other Indians were in sight. None were visible, and he was on the point of turning back, when the sight of a bubbling spring close at hand apprised him that the warm day, added to his violent exercise, had given him a raging thirst. He would not have hesitated a moment to drink out of the river, although its waters were quite muddy from the recent rains; but when he saw sparkling fluid before him, cool and like the liquid mountain air, he could not forbear stealing forward to obtain a drink, although his own sense of prudence was violated by his doing so, when in such proximity to his deadliest enemies.

But he gave no ear to the whisperings of prudence, and the next moment, he was lying on his face, quaffing the delicious nectar, that sent its thrill of pleasure through every nerve of his body.

He drank long and deeply, and then with a sigh of delight, he rose on his knees and looked about him. It seemed as if fate was against Carson, for he saw only a rod or two distant an Apache squaw, approaching the spring with a vessel for water. Her head was lowered, as though she were in reverie, or was watching the ground that she stepped upon, but discovery could be delayed but a moment, and indeed in the next moment it came.

CHAPTER II.

ENVIRONED BY PERIL.

It is a fearful thing to take the life of a human being, when that human being is a woman, there are few who would not hesitate before striking the fatal blow.

But when such a thing becomes necessary to save your own life, it cannot be supposed that you will sit calmly by and let the opportunity pass.

Kit Carson fully realized his position; and, as he crouched like a tiger, with his eyes fixed upon the approaching woman, he was only waiting for the proper moment to leap forward and end her earthly career forever.

Still the squaw walked slowly forward with her eyes upon the ground, and the vessel at her side, as if she were in some deep reverie, and unconscious of whither her footsteps were treading.

Suddenly a meteor-like body shot through the air, and she was pinioned by the throat. As her startled gaze encountered the face of the hunter so close to her own, she dropped her vessel, raised her hands in deprecatory gesture and managed to gasp out.

"Oh! don't! don't!"

The clear pronunciation of the words surprised Carson, and he loosened his grip upon her throat.

"If you shout or make any outcry, I'll kill you as quick as lightning!"

"Oh! please, sir, don't kill me!"

"Why not?"

"*Because I am of your own race!*"

He started back, and saw that she spoke the truth. She was of a dark, swarthy look, young, with dark, lustrous eyes, beautifully arched eyebrows, oval face, classical features, and small white teeth, she certainly was eminently beautiful.

"What are you doing here, then?" was the very natural

question of Carson. "If you are white, and I see you are, you've no business here."

"I am a prisoner."

"Do you wish to escape?"

"It has been my prayer night and day ever since my capture."

"Then come with me, and don't make any noise."

Taking the girl by the hand, Kit Carson started on his return, but had gone but a short distance, when he abruptly paused, with the thought that he was going only deeper into the danger. Looking into the face of the beautiful creature beside him, he asked.

"How many Apaches are there near us?"

"Over twenty."

"Are they all in camp?"

"Yes; they have been hunting, and are waiting along the river for two white men in a canoe."

Carson smiled.

"I am one of those white men and it looks to me as though we are in rather hot quarters. How long before they will miss you?"

"Not long, for they always seem to be suspecting that I am going to try and run away from them."

"If that is the case, we had better go down the river, and trust to luck for Buck to find us again."

The girl seemed fully to trust her friend, and followed him obediently, only adding, in an alarmed whisper.

"We must hurry."

Carson was well aware of that, and he lost no time. Fortunately he and his friend were protected by the dense undergrowth, which, while it impeded their progress, still amply compensated them, by affording such a hiding place for them, whether they were stationary or moving.

Carson would have given anything in the world for his canoe at this moment, but it was several hundred yards above him, and to reach it and return, would consume the few minutes in which his escape must be made, if indeed it was to be made at all. He had now not only his own

life, but that of the being beside him, to look after, and the singular manner in which they had met, together with her extraordinary beauty, which was increased by her picturesque costume, had awakened a chivalric interest in her, and he felt that he was ready to face any danger and to encounter any foe, if her welfare only demanded it.

As the young hunter, Carson, who had not yet achieved the renown which has since made his name so famous, hurried forward with the beautiful girl close behind him, he had time to collect his thoughts, and gathered his mental energies for the work before him. He saw that when her escape should be discovered, some of the Indians would instantly take up the trail, and speedily discover the true state of things, when the whole force would take up the hunt.

"Isn't there a canoe somewhere about here?" inquired Carson in the same abrupt manner, when they had progressed some distance farther.

"The Apaches have canoes, but I do not know where they are."

"They must be along the river. We will get nearer the water and look—Hello!"

At that instant, a peculiar quivering yell sounded upon the air. The girl started and caught the arm of her preserver.

"They have discovered my flight, and will soon be here."

"No doubt of that, and we must try and manage to be somewhere else when they are here. Heavens! if I can only find a boat. Thank God!"

At the very moment of uttering the exclamation, the young hunter caught sight of a small Indian canoe nestling under the bank. The next second he had seized it, lifted it into the water, and placed his charge within it. Then he followed her.

"We have no paddle!" she exclaimed in a startled whisper.

Kit Carson stamped the ground with vexation.

"Too bad ! too bad ! perhaps it's lying somewhere near here."

He hurriedly felt around in the thick grass and undergrowth, but he hardly expected to find it. It is a custom among the Apaches, when camping close to a stream where their canoes are lying, to keep their paddles near them so as to prevent any sudden advantage being taken of the canoe.

"Do you find it ?" inquired the girl, who now that her hopes of escape had been raised to the highest pitch, was fearfully apprehensive of being recaptured.

"No, it is not here, and there is no need of hunting for it."

He still hesitated a moment, but that same fearful yell sounded out again upon the air, and convinced him of his fearful peril.

"There's no good in waiting here," he exclaimed as he broke off a branch of undergrowth, and springing into the boat, began using it as though it were a paddle with which to propel the frail vessel.

So easily are these leathery canoes driven through the water, that Carson found himself moving with considerable speed, although of course, no approach could be made to the velocity which he would have had, had he possessed the coveted Indian paddle.

The river at this point was about a hundred yards wide and Carson's great desire was to place it between himself and enemies. To do this of course it was necessary to cross the stream, and thereby the more certainly expose himself to the savages lurking along shore.

Had he and Buck Buckiam undertaken to descend the river by keeping in the middle of it, they would have been exposed to certain death a mile back ; but, as there was peril in every position in which the daring young scout could place himself, whether he remained stationary or moved forward, he chose the latter, and pushing out into the current struck boldly for the other shore.

Kit Carson was always celebrated for his nerve and activity, and he now plied his brush paddle with a tench-

ing vigor. While he kept his eye fixed upon the bank toward which he was making his way with such superhuman efforts, his companion turned her dark, startled eyes toward the other shore, where her dreaded enemies were clustering in such numbers.

Half the distance was passed, when she gave a gasp, and Carson looked back. There was good cause for alarm, for a brawny Apache had waded out into the stream, and stood with tomahawk raised and poised in the very act of throwing the fearful missile.

"Lower your head!" commanded the hunter, "for he is aiming at you!"

The girl obeyed, and before Carson could bring his gun to his shoulder, the tomahawk left the grasp of the Apache, who aimed with marvellous skill and hurled with prodigious momentum. But the eagle eye of the scout saw the whizzing missile, as it came spinning like a meteor toward him, and he threw his gun barrel forward as a shield to protect the body of the girl, who was crouching in the bottom of the canoe.

The next instant there was a sharp, metallic zip, and the blade of the tomahawk struck fire from the rifle barrel, and glancing off, flew far out into the river, and sank out of sight.

"Now use the brush, while I 'tend to that dog!" whispered Carson, as he raised the hammer of his gun, and pointed the piece toward the baffled Apache.

The girl obeyed with alacrity, and the canoe once more moved forward with considerable speed.

The Indian after hurling his weapon, and witnessing its failure, raised his gun; but, as he did so, he saw that of the white man pointed at him, and expecting the coming of the deadly bullet, he instantly sprang in the air, and then swooping like a madman, dashed away, springing and leaping from side to side, so as to disconcert the aim of the scout.

His actions were so grotesquely ludicrous that, in spite of the seriousness of the occasion, Kit Carson was convulsed with laughter.

"He's a little the biggest fool I ever did see!" he exclaimed, as he lowered his piece. "He needn't be afraid of my shooting as long as he keeps running, for I've got better use for my bullets."

A moment later, the panic-stricken Apache had disappeared in the undergrowth, and our friends, for the time, were left again to themselves.

"It won't be for long," said Carson, "you are paddling so well, that you may keep on, while I look out for the gentleman."

While the sharp eye of our hero scanned the shore on the alert for their treacherous enemies, the girl used the branch with a facility and effect which showed that she was no novice in handling the paddle.

Seeing no enemies, Carson allowed his admiring gaze to rest, for a moment, upon his companion, who, just then, would have made an admirable subject for a painter. Her face was aglow with excitement, and her beautiful rounded arms, and full form stood out in bold relief, as she called into play all the energy and skill at her command.

Her dark eyes rested upon the shore—the haven of her hopes, while Carson once more scrutinized the dangerous ground they had so recently left.

A few strokes more and the prow of the canoe touched land, and the girl lightly leaped out. At that instant, Carson raised his rifle, with lightning like quickness and discharged it. A frenzied shriek told the result, and he immediately sprang after her.

"Quick! there's something less than a hundred of the yelling varmints!" he added, as the two darted away.

CHAPTER III.

A DARING EXPLOIT.

The bullets whistled all round them, as Carson spoke, but providentially neither he nor the girl were injured. The instant their feet touched hard earth, they sprang away with all the speed at their command, the Apaches yelling furiously, while their bullets cut the bushes all around them.

The day was now well advanced, night not being more than a couple of hours distant, and, if the fugitives could only keep clear of the redskins until that night, there was every reasonable prospect of eluding them altogether.

But right here was the fearful danger, and Carson fully appreciated the fact.

"We must lose no time," said he. "I wonder where Buck is?" he repeated partly to himself.

"Whom do you mean?" she inquired.

"He is a friend of mine,—an old hunter who is somewhere on the other bank."

"Then the poor man will be killed."

"I wish we were as safe as he," replied Carson, turning his face toward her, with a smile, as they hurried along.

"But he must be right among the Apaches," she added with great simplicity.

"It isn't the first time, nor the twentieth. I wouldn't care if he was in the wigwam of the chief himself. He knows enough and too much for the rascally varmints. But, let me ask your name.

"Inez Alcado," was the unhesitating reply.

"That name is Spanish."

"And so am I. My father lives near Santa Fe, New

Mexico, and his heart is bowed down at the absence of his only child. I was the only child he had, for mother is dead."

"How came these villainous dogs to capture you?"

"My father," said she, speaking English so fluently that Carson scarcely would have suspected her nationality, had she not announced it, "was in Santa Fe, and I was alone with the servants. The Jicarillas came riding down one morning; and, before I knew what the danger was, they had shot down the servants, and I was placed on a horse riding away at full speed."

"You have been with them ever since?"

"Yes; and it has been a dreadful life. I have made many trials to escape, but they have seized me always at the moment when hope was the highest. Do you think they will do so again?" she asked turning her soulful eyes upon him.

"Not if my life will prevent it," was the chivalric reply of the daring young scout.

"If your life is in danger, I want you to leave me, for they will not kill me and they will you."

She spoke with all the earnest simplicity of childhood, and her companion, or lover, as he might truly be termed replied with the same seriousness.

"Senorita Alenda, you are now on your way to your father's. If you fail to get there, it will be because Kit Carson loses his life in attempting to take you to him. That is settled?"

She turned her beautiful face toward him, and for a moment was silent. Then she said.

"You are very good!"

That single expression sent a thrill through the young hunter's being, and he felt all the chivalric devotion of a knight. It seemed to him just then as though it would be an ecstatic pleasure to die for so beautiful and so good a being as Senorita Inez Alcala.

All this time, the two were hurrying through the wood with great speed, the elastic frame of Inez enabling her to keep pace with the tougher-limbed scout. Carson

as a matter of course, took the lead, she maintaining herself very near him, while when he exchanged words, he slightly turned his head, so as to gain a view of her face.

There were no sounds of pursuit, but neither of the fugitives hoped for a moment that it was given over. If the Apaches had no canoes in which to cross the stream, they could swim it, and occupy but a few minutes in crossing.

They expected every moment to hear the exultant yells of their enemies, and both were continually glancing behind them in the fearful anticipation of seeing the dusky demons spring out of the woods, accompanied by the sharp crack of the rifle or the whizz of the brain-splitting tomahawk.

It was impossible to conceal their trail from the lynx eyes of the Jicarillas, for these redskins possess the most extraordinary knowledge of wood-craft, and will follow the almost invisible footsteps with the unerring certainty and wolf-like persistency of bloodhounds.

Our hero was right in apprehending trouble; for, when they reached a more open part of the wood, Inez glanced back and declared that she saw several Apaches flitting among the trees, as though attempting to come up with or surround them, without giving notice of their approach.

It was so near dusk, that Carson could but hope that his companion was mistaken; but one glance backward convinced him that she was not. The fleet-footed redskins were close on their heels again.

"Do you know anything of this part of the country?" asked Carson, in a hurried undertone.

"Nothing at all," was the reply.

"We must find some place, where we can make a stand for there is no dodging the dogs this time. We have got to make a fight for it."

"Yonder is a pile of rocks, where you may find an opportunity to shelter your body, while you fire at them."

"God bless you for the discovery!" was the fervent ejaculation of the hunter, as he dashed toward their

shelter. "There is hope yet, and if we reach that we must and shall do it."

The moment they turned in that direction, the Apaches comprehended their intention, and attempted to head them off. For a time, it looked as if they were about to succeed, and had Inez Alcada been less fleet of foot, they assuredly would have done so; but she sped along with deer-like swiftness, the Jicarillas whooping and yelping in the hope of scaring her into giving over her attempts to escape, and voluntarily coming back to captivity again.

But the fugitives improved their advantage to the utmost, and in a few seconds were among the jagged mass of rocks, where, for an instant they paused, bewildered and unable to decide in what direction to turn.

"Here quick!" called out the sharp-eyed lady, darting toward the left and almost immediately disappearing in a cavernous opening. Carson lost no time in following her and found that he had entered a cavern of respectable size though a rent or yawn of barely sufficient size to admit the passage of the body of a single man at a time.

"Here we are safe for a few minutes at least!" exclaimed the scout. "Now, do get as far back as possible, and keep your body out of the way of flying bullets, while I attend to the varmints."

As the girl had no weapons, she could be of no earthly use, and she obeyed the injunction of Kit Carson. The latter had loaded his gun while running, but he relied now principally upon his knife, and he drew this and placed himself in fighting attitude.

But although he waited some fifteen minutes, he saw and heard nothing of the Apaches, who doubtless were too prudent to dash to certain death, by attempting to force their way by the main entrance into the cave.

The twilight of the coming night was on the wood when Carson took his refuge in the rocks, and the darkness rapidly increased. Still our hero did not dare to leave his position for a moment. The Apaches were all around him. While crouching, he had gained enough to

learn that about a half a dozen were in pursuit, and so long as they did not "flank" him he was secure.

But his refuge, from the very circumstances of the case was but temporary at the most, it could not last longer than the night, and if there was any means by which the red-kins could get to the rear, it was all over with him.

This was the ever present fear, and he called to Læz to examine and see whether there was any possibility of this. In a few moments, she sent back the cheering reply that all was secure.

"Good!" was the commentary of the scout, and then placing his hands to his mouth, he uttered a peculiar sharp whistle, which could be heard echoing a long distance through the woods. A thrill of delight ran through him as a moment later he heard precisely the same signal come back to him from no considerable distance.

"Back isn't asleep," muttered Carson, "and if he don't soon make a scattering among these varmints, then I'm powerfully mistaken—that's all."

Turning his head toward his fair companion, he called to her to cheer up, for their situation looked more hopeful than ever before, and then he waited, watched and listened.

For a time not an Indian was to be seen, but by and by he detected shadowy forms moving to and fro, although they made no demonstrations of attack.

Ten, fifteen minutes, a half hour dragged slowly by and still all was quiet. But Carson's heart beat high with hope, for he was in momentary expectation of a demonstration from his friend.

There was no moon, but the sky was clear, and the bright starlight enabled him to discern quite distinctly objects, within a radius of a dozen yards or so, and he kept an unremitting watch upon the phantom-like figures, of which he now and then obtained a glimpse.

He could have easily shot one of the savages, but he concluded to remain quiet, as long as they did so.

At once the sharp crack of a rifle broke the stillness,

and immediately a series of diabolical shouts and yells burst upon the air.

"Quick, Tom, give it to 'em! What you about, Jake! Strike out permiscuous, Sam! Raise the ha'r of that sneak-in' varmint, Bill! Now, Shorty, knife that redskin, and all together boys! By the living jingo, boys, but this is powerful sport! Ki, hi! yi!"

At the same instant, Kit Carson, understanding the ruse, fired his gun, and dashed out knife in hand.

The Jicarillas believing that a party of hunters were upon them, were panic-stricken; and, springing to their feet, dashed away pell-mell, each one bent on saving his own precious scalp. In the space of a single minute, not a redskin was at hand! All were fleeing for their lives, so complete was the success of Buck Buckram's stratagem!

The two hunters met and shook hands. Carson quickly explained all that had taken place, since their separation, and Inez Alcado was brought forth and made acquainted with her rescuer.

"It won't do to stay here," said Buck, "they'll be back agin in half an hour and we had better make ourselves scarce!"

The old trapper was well acquainted with Senor Alcada, and the party at once set out for his hacienda.

Two days later, to the inexpressible joy of the father, his daughter was restored to his arms; and, after hearing his soulful gratitude, and after exchanging a feeling farewell with the beautiful Inez, the two hunters set out for more stirring scenes.

CHAPTER IV.A BRUSH WITH NAVAJOES—PUNISHING THE INDIAN HORSE
THIEVES.

Kit Carson now makes his appearance in a far different scene.

In the year 1828, when our hero was nineteen years of age, he found himself in Taos, New Mexico, where Ewing Young, the proprietor of a trapping expedition, was engaged in raising a party of men, to chastise the Navajoes, who had broken up a company of his, while engaged in hunting and trapping near the Colorado of the West.

Young had no difficulty in raising forty men, consisting of Americans, Canadians and Frenchmen, at the head of which he placed himself as leader. He had another object beside that of chastising the Indians. He had suffered great pecuniary loss from the result of the first expedition, and it was his intention to make all he could out of his men, by employing them as trappers.

Kit Carson eagerly joined this company, and in April 1829, they left Taos. Traveling fifty miles to the northward, they entered the Navajoe country. Passing through Zuni, a Pueblo town, they made their way to the head of Salt River, one of the tributaries of the Rio Gila.

They had hardly reached this place, when they discovered the same party of Navajoes who had routed the former expedition. They were about fifty in number, and brave as they always are, they instantly manifested an eagerness for the fight.

Fortunately for the trappers, the redskins were discovered at the right moment. The hunters were proceeding in a long Indian file, and were just descending from a

ridge of hills, when Carson detected the savages several hundred yards distant.

Young, who was near Carson, immediately signalled to his men to halt, so that the Indians did not see more than half a dozen of them. The men were used to this sort of business, and they understood what was the part of prudence in the matter.

They immediately separated into two parties, forming themselves half on one side the path and half on the other. At the same time, those in front fell back as though frightened at the sight of the Navajoes.

The ruse succeeded completely in deceiving them. The trappers had barely time to throw themselves in position, when a terrific yell rose from the redskins, and putting their horses at full speed, they dashed exultingly forward.

They were allowed to advance, until they were completely in the trap, when a murderous cross-fire was opened upon them, and, at the first fire fifteen warriors were knocked from their horses, while many others were severely wounded.

This unexpected reception sent a panic among the Indians, and before they could recover, our friends advanced from cover, and with their screeching yells, charged upon their enemies.

But the latter were too terrified to recover, and they scattered in every direction, leaving Young and his trappers complete masters of the field. In a few moments not a redskin was visible.

Having accomplished the first object of the expedition, Young and his party began trapping down Salt River to San Francisco River, from which point they leisurely made their way to the head of the stream.

The Indians continually hovered near them, and succeeded in annoying them not a little. Occasionally, on a dark night, they would steal a horse or mule, or a trap; and, if a trapper ventured off alone, it required no little skill and bravery for him to bring himself and animal safely back to camp again.

When the head of the San Francisco River was reached

It was found that the thieving Indians had stolen the greater part of their traps. Captain Young concluded to divide the party, one division going to Sacramento Valley in California, while the other was to return to Taos to replace the traps which had been stolen.

Kit Carson was a member of the California party, which numbered eighteen, and of which Young himself took the lead.

Forty years ago California and indeed the greater part of the west, was a wild unknown region, of which nothing was known except the vague rumors of hunters and trappers who had visited that region. None of the party who now set out for the Sacramento Valley knew anything definite of it. They had learned from friendly Indians whom they encountered, that they had a large tract of country to pass through which was entirely destitute of water; and, as a precautionary measure, they carefully sewed up the skins of three deer, and filled them with water.

For four days they journeyed over a country almost as barren as the Desert of Sahara, and they would have perished beyond all question, but for the novel tanks that they had brought with them.

At the close of the fourth day, the actions of the mules, showed that they had scented water, and they were so much in need of it, that the party spent two days here in recruiting.

Four days more of uninterrupted travel brought them in sight of the great Canon of the Colorado, where they encountered a party of Mohave Indians, of whom they purchased a dilapidated mare, which was killed and eaten by the trappers with the greatest gusto. In the course of the succeeding week, they struck a stream which rises in Coast Range, runs north-east, and finally disappears in the marshes and sands of the Great Basin. The dry bed of this river was followed several days before they reached any water, after leaving which they made their way westward to the Mission of San Gabriel.

It was on this expedition, and at this early age, that Kit Carson began to excite the admiration and wonder of older hunters, by his extraordinary skill and his prompt dauntless courage. He was a "dead shot," and seemed literally without fear, eagerly volunteering for any duty required of the party, and seemingly experiencing the keenest enjoyment at a chance to mingle in the desperate hand-to-hand encounter.

A few of the Indians belonging to the Mission of San Rafael, after committing numerous excesses, fled from the station. The priest sent a powerful force in pursuit, and they were discovered & secreted in an Indian village, whose natives were enemies to the priest's party.

The latter made a formal demand that the deserters should be given up, but they were "snubbed," and a desperate fight followed, and the priest's party were utterly routed. Still loth to yield the point, and smarting from the manner in which his men had been treated, the priest applied to the trappers for help.

Kit Carson and eleven of the hunters immediately volunteered their services, and joined the defeated party, who returned in high spirits to the attack. The Indians fought bravely, but Carson was a host in himself, while all of his men were experienced Indian fighters, and they thundered into the village with an impetuosity which could not be stayed.

The Indian town was captured, and one third of its inhabitants killed, after which the demand for the deserters was repeated and instantly complied with.

A few nights succeeding this adventure, it became stormy and the party encamped with Egyptian darkness around them. Not apprehending any danger, the sentinels were somewhat lax in their vigilance, and screened themselves as much as possible from the howling wind and rain.

But the wild Indian revels in the tempestuous darkness, and always chooses such an occasion for the attack upon the unsuspecting settler and trapper; and the hunters and trappers should have been more on the alert against their old enemies.

In the middle of the night, when profound stillness—except the dismal sweep and patter of the rain—was upon the prairie, a number of Indians crept into camp and stampeded sixty of the horses. It was done so adroitly that the gigantic theft was not discovered until the following morning.

"That is too bad!" exclaimed the irritated Captain Young. "It is too much to submit to."

"Why submit to it?" asked Kit Carson, as his fine grey eye sparkled.

"How can we help it?"

"Easily enough."

The captain looked at the young trapper, in a manner, which showed he did not comprehend what he was referring to.

"What do you mean, Kit?"

"If you will give me permission, I will recover them for you."

"I am afraid it cannot be done; but, if you wish to undertake it, you may take the remaining horses and all the men you choose."

"I will show you what we can do," was the confident reply of the young hunter.

Captain Young had seen enough of the valiant little fellow to appreciate his skill and pluck, and he knew that if such a thing as the recovery of the horses was possible, Kit Carson was the man to accomplish it.

The latter lost no time in availing himself of the permission given. He selected twelve men, and the remaining horses, which numbered fourteen, and ten minutes later, they were in the saddle and ready to set out upon the adventurous undertaking.

Captain Young arranged that he and the remainder of the men should remain in camp until the return of their comrades.

"Do the best you can, Kit," he called out, as the little band struck off over the prairie on a rapid gallop.

Kit and his companions were well mounted, and they at

ence took the trail and pursued it with an unflagging vigor.

As he anticipated, it was found to lead toward the Sierra Nevada Mountains, the trail being so broad and distinct that they were enabled to follow it without the least slackening of speed.

For over one hundred miles the pursuit was continued without intermission, when they saw, by unmistakable signs, that they were in close proximity to the aboriginal horse thieves.

Advancing in the same cautious manner, some distance further, they came up with them, and detected them enjoying a French dinner upon horse-flesh, a half dozen animals having been slain to supply the luxury.

The eagle eye of Carson speedily discovered that the true plan was to make a dash upon them, and it required but a few minutes to complete his preparation.

They stole up, as close as was possible, and then gathering together, they charged down upon them under full speed.

They came down like a thunderbolt, and eight of the Indians were killed in the desperate hand-to-hand conflict which ensued. Then as their horses were all recovered, they allowed the rest to escape.

Every horse excepting the six slain, were retaken. With them, Kit safely made his way back again, to the camp of the delighted Captain Young.

CHAPTER V.

A FIGHT WITH CROW INDIANS.

In the autumn of 1830, Kit Carson joined his second trapping expedition. It started from Santa Fe, and was placed under the charge of an old trapper named Fitzpatrick, who had formed it for the purpose of trapping among the streams of the Rocky Mountains. Among those who joined it, was Buck Buckram, the old hunter, who proved such a valuable ally to Carson, during his rescue of Inez Alcada. He, like many other older hunters, had formed a strong admiration for the daring young trapper, and was glad to be united with him on any expedition.

Before starting, Carson found opportunity to visit the hacienda of Senor Alcada, where he was joyfully welcomed by father and daughter, who could never forget the debt they owed him, and who compelled him to pledge them a visit whenever it was possible to do so.

The trappers traveled north, and began operations on Platte River, which they followed down stream to one of its tributaries, the Sweet River, from which point they worked on to Green River. They were soon after joined by some of their friends and the party spent the winter of 1830 and '31 on Salmon River.

They were now in the Blackfoot country, where they were in constant danger from these treacherous rascals. Four of the men, while out hunting buffaloes, were attacked, and, although they fought bravely, the whole four were killed and tomahawked. The murderers effected a safe retreat to the mountains, where it was impossible to follow them.

In the spring they learned that Captain Gaunt, an old mountaineer, known to them all, with his men, was at

Park. Kit Carson and four of the men instantly set out to join them, and after nearly two weeks discovered the party.

The succeeding winter was passed along the Arkansas, where they had met with extremely good fortune in trapping.

The snow fell to a great depth and their animals suffered severely. The men with great labor, cut down cotton-wood trees and using the bark and limbs as fodder, managed to keep their animals from starving to death. As for themselves they had taken care to provide a large quantity of buffalo meat, so that they fared sumptuously all through the bleak dismal winter.

One dark cold night, Buck Buckram and Kit Carson, as was their custom, lay down side by side with their blankets wrapped around them. It was quite late, and the wintry wind whirled the snow in blinding eddies, and whistled keenly about their ears, so that they instinctively lay close together that they might share the warmth of one another's bodies.

An hour or so passed, and Carson was just gliding into unconsciousness, when Buck touched him.

"What is the matter?" inquired the young scout.

"There's some one among our animals."

Kit Carson sprang to his feet.

"Hold on a minute," admonished the old hunter, who was more deliberate in his movements. "It may be a bear or wolf, but its more likely that its the in'arns' redskins."

With gun in hand, the two immediately moved out of camp, toward the spot where their horses were secured. The night was of pitchy darkness, they sank to their knees in the snow, which struck their face with the keenness of fine shot.

As they moved along a faint neigh occasionally reached their ears. It sounded far away, but it was in reality close at hand, and it was the "sign" that had reached Buck Buckram's ear of something being wrong among the horses.

It was more than probable that their old enemies the

Black feet were around, and the two scouts moved cautiously forward, ready for an assault at any moment.

In this stealthy manner, they made their way through the blinding snow for a hundred yards or so, when Buck Backram paused, and leaning his head toward his companion, uttered an imprecation and added.

"Jes' what I expected! *the tarmints have been hyar.*"

"And we can't do anything?" was the inquiring remark of Carson. "Not till morning; they've run off with some of the horses, and we mought as well go to sleep till daylight."

This was the voice of prudence, and it was acted upon at once. The two hunters made their way back to camp, and, without mentioning what had occurred to their companions, they again wrapped themselves up in their blankets, and, in a few minutes sank into a profound slumber.

But at the earliest streak of light they were astir, and it was then discovered that they had been visited by the Crow Indians instead of the Blackfeet. There had been fully fifty of them, and they had succeeded in running off nearly a dozen of their best animals.

Kit Carson instantly formed a party of rescue. He chose twelve men beside himself, and including Buck Backram, and mounting them upon the best horses at their command, started in pursuit.

As upon the previous occasion, there was no difficulty in following the trail, owing to the depth of the snow, which, at the same time, had prevented the thieves from making very good progress.

But, after progressing some distance, they began to grow bewildered from the large numbers of buffaloes which had crossed it during the night. This, in time completely obliterated the trail; when Carson and his companions were compelled to fall back on their own shrewdness.

Ascending quite an elevation, Carson took a survey of the surrounding country, and announced the direction which he believed the redskins had taken. His conclusion being emphatically endorsed by Buck Backram and

the older hunters, the young leader of the expedition had no hesitation in pursuing the course, without paying any regard to the trail.

They experienced one serious difficulty. Their horses, owing to their poor and scant fodder, were in very poor condition, and after travelling about forty miles, they were compelled to halt and give them rest; but, as the Indians were doubtless laboring under the same difficulty, it was no great disadvantage after all.

They found on traveling this distance, that the snow was only several inches in depth; but the weather was bitterly cold, and the prospect around them as black and dismal as it is possible to imagine.

A half mile or so to the west, was quite a grove of timber, and it was decided to go into camp in it until morning. Accordingly they turned to the left, and the entire company in Indian file, with Carson and Buckram at their head, made their way toward the timber.

They had approached within a few yards, when the eagle eye of Kit caught a flicker of light through the trees.

"If I ain't very much mistaken," said he, to Buckram, "the very redskins we are after are in there."

"Shouldn't wonder," replied the old trapper, as he looked toward the timber.

It was just growing dark, but enough light remained for all the hunters to detect a thin column of smoke rising through the tree tops against the clear cold sky, proving unequivocally that a party of Indians were encamped there.

The trappers instantly retreated to a secluded spot to wait until night had fairly settled, before making their attack. It was necessary also that they should arrange their plans before starting.

In a country like the present, the first great care of a trapper is to see that his horse is secure against capture. The party placed theirs in a secluded spot, where they were not likely to be seen, and then they carefully exam-

lined their rifles, to see that they were ready for instant emergency.

Everything being prepared, the party set out, eager for the affray, and ready to face any peril.

Coming in sight of the grove, they made a half circle around it, so as to ascertain whether the Indians were alarmed or not. Everything was quiet, and apparently no suspicion of pursuit had entered the heads of the savages.

Still, as the Crows were powerful in number, it was necessary that the trappers should have every advantage they could possibly gain, and when they began their real advance, they crawled through the icy snow, for a long distance, and at a very slow rate, on their hands and knees.

This uncomfortable means of progress was continued, after they were fairly among the trees, and until they reached a point from which they could gain a distinct view of the redskins.

It was then discovered that the Crows had erected two rough forts, and were divided into two parties. They were indulging in a high old dance and jollification in celebration of their recent thieving exploit, with little thought of their neighbors.

Close to one of the rough forts, the twelve stolen horses were discovered all securely fastened. They were in such plain sight of the Indians, that there was no earthly chance of recapturing them, without a collision with the Indians, in which case, it was more than probable that the redskins would get the best of it, as they far outnumbered the trappers, and were in just that excited state, when they would enjoy a sanguinary encounter.

With characteristic prudence and courage, the hunters determined to remain where they were until the dance ended, and the Indians lay down to sleep. When it is remembered that the ground was covered with the snow, and the air was bitterly cold, and they were scantily clad, it will be seen that they suffered greatly.

But they bore it unflinchingly, and at a late hour the

dance ended, and the exhausted savages wrapped their blankets around them and lay down.

When all was still, Kit Carson and five of his companions crept noiselessly forward, and cut the thongs which bound the horses, and by throwing soft snow-balls at them they were finally driven out the grove, without exciting the suspicions of the Crows.

One would suppose that after they were fairly out the grove, with all their horses recovered, the trappers were satisfied; but Kit Carson and two others maintained that the Indians should be punished and taught a lesson that they would remember. They finally gained the others to their belief, and they returned to the attack.

An Indian dog gave the alarm, and the Crows sprang out the forts. A most desperate conflict began. The savages at first were driven into their forts, with quite a number slain; but they rallied and drove the trappers in turn. The latter were reinforced by the three who had been left in charge of the horses, and advanced again, and at day-break the Indians scattered and fled, leaving Carson and his men masters of the field. Several of the latter had been badly wounded, but none killed, while the Crows had lost a large percentage of their number.

The trappers then safely made their way back and joined their comrades on the Arkansas River.

CHAPTER VI

THE NARROWEST ESCAPE OF KIT CARSON'S LIFE.

Young, and by no means unhandsome, modest in his demeanor, quiet and self-confident, a perfect devil incarnate in an Indian fight, of almost extraordinary danger and courage, of panther-like agility, and with a frame capable of sustaining the most incredible exposure and hardship,—such was Kit Carson, the renowned Hunter and Guide of the Far west.

At the hacienda of Don Alcada, this remarkable man was a quiet and bashful lover of the beautiful senorita, Inez. The emotion of heart-felt gratitude in the latter was not long in changing to a more tender feeling, while the grim old *yadre* looked upon the couple with no impartial eye.

Those were delightful days that Carson spent at the residence of Senor Alcada,—seasons which are ever green spots in one's remembrance. No spoken words of love passed between them, but it was seen in their looks, their action, their softly modulated words, their coyness in each other's presence, and their pleasure when together.

The Senorita was young, lovely and immensely rich. Carson was young and very poor. Never would he ask for that fascinating little white hand until he could do it as an equal. Such was his characteristic resolve and to it he adhered with the even resolve which characterized him all through his eventful life.

The hacienda was Paradise to him, and he could have stayed away his life there; but he was not the sentimental type to indulge in such thoughts; and, after a visit of a few days, he bade the charming girl farewell and has-

tened to Taos, to plunge again into the exciting scenes of his adventurous career.

In October, 1832, Captain Lee, formerly of the United States Army, and then a partner of Bent and St. Vrain, left Taos with a trapping expedition of which Carson and his old friend Buckram were leading members. The party were on their way to join Robidoux and his trappers, who were known to be somewhere on the Green River or its tributaries.

After leaving Taos, they followed the favorite route of trappers, a mule path, known as the "Old Spanish Trail," which leads from New Mexico into California.

Reaching White River, they followed it down on it they arrived at Green River, which they crossed, and struck across the country, toward one of its branches, known as Wintry River, where they found Robidoux, with a party of twenty men, engaged in trapping and trading as opportunity presented.

Shortly after the parties united, snow began to fall, and the signs indicated that winter was close at hand. Accordingly they selected a site near the mouth of Wintry River and went into winter quarters. They were furnished with skin lodges, such as are common among the Indians of the West.

Among the men employed was a California Indian, known as Quippy, who was remarkable for his skill and shrewdness as a hunter, but who withal was a treacherous dog, whom Carson and Buck Buckram disliked from the beginning. They warned Robidoux against him, but the latter did not heed them, believing their ears misinterpreted.

The party had been in winter quarters but a short time, when Quippy suddenly disappeared, and with six of the very best horses belonging to the party. The enraged Robidoux at once repaired to Carson in his difficulty and laid the case before him.

"He is not the first horse-thief I've settled with," replied the young scout, "and I'll soon bring him to terms."

Buck Buckram offered to join him in the pursuit, but Kit thanked him, and told him that as there was but one

man to follow, he would be ashamed to take any one with him. Accordingly he started alone.

He had gone but a short distance, however, when he reconsidered his conclusion, and regretted that he had not taken Back with him. He was strongly disposed to turn back, but he finally turned off toward a Ute village, whose inhabitants were on friendly terms with the whites, and asked for the warriors to accompany him as a guide.

Kit was so well known to their people, as a daring and successful hunter, that he could have secured a dozen at once; but he selected only one, and with him, as well mounted as himself, the two set out upon the chase.

Their horses were in splendid condition, and they at once struck off upon a sweeping gallop. The trail of the stolen animals was speedily detected, and the pursuit kept up at a rattling pace. They found the trail to lead toward Green River, and it was soon discovered that the thief had put his animals at a high rate of speed, with the evident determination of discouraging any attempt at a recapture.

But he did not understand his pursuer. The latter concluded that California was his destination, and he was ready, if necessary, to follow him there to recover the stolen property.

All went well until they had accomplished about a hundred miles, when, unfortunately, the horse of the Ute was taken sick, and gave out. The Indian could not continue the chase unless he did on foot, and this he resolutely refused to do, although Carson strongly urged him, and offered to alternate with him in riding his animal.

But the Ute was obstinate and would not consent. Turning on his heel, he started homeward, and left his friend to manage the pursuit single-handed, as best he could.

The bravest man would have been excusable for turning back, as Quippy was one of the most desperate and dangerous Indians of the west, and Carson well knew that he would fight like the tiger unto death, before he would surrender a single one of the stolen animals. But our hero was not to be discouraged, and he pressed on alone.

Thirty miles after parting with the Ute, Kit discovered the chase. Striking his spurs into his charger's side, the latter plunged forward at a terrific rate, thundering over the prairie, like a meteor.

Quippy had discovered his pursuer, at the same instant that he was discovered himself, and immediately prepared for a deadly encounter. He turned and hastened toward cover, whence he might fire upon his adversary, and reload, and fire again, without any danger to himself.

Had he reached cover, the career of Kit Carson would have ended then and there; but the scout saw and comprehended his peril. Raising his rifle to his shoulder with the quickness of lightning, and while his horse was still thundering forward at full speed, the trapper fired, just as the savage was in the act of leaping behind cover.

One agonized screech and a frenzied up-throwing of the arms, and the red-skin fell dead in his tracks.

The shot was in the very nick of time, for Quippy's gun was discharged at the same instant, and the bullet whistled close to his face.

The six horses were found wandering over the prairie, and, after some difficulty, Carson collected them together and set out on his return to camp, safely reaching it a short time afterward.

Kit was always inordinately fond of hunting, and while his companions were in camp, he frequently wandered off and was absent for a day or more at a time.

On one of these occasions, late one afternoon, he was returning when he came upon the track of some elk, and instantly turned about to follow them. He had just turned his horse over to one of his men, and started on foot in pursuit of the game.

A mile from camp, the tracks of the elk were found to be so fresh, that he knew it was close at hand. Stealing along with great care, he finally gained the shelter of some trees, which brought the beautiful animals within range.

The wary animals, which are gifted with an extraordinary keenness of accent, detected his approach at this in-

stant and began moving away. But the next instant the gun of the hunter was discharged, and the noblest of the game made one or two frenzied bounds and dropped dead.

The report of the rifle was still echoing among the trees and over the prairie, when a terrific roar reached the ears of the hunter, and turning his head, he saw two enormous grizzly bears lumbering toward him.

He had just fired his gun, so that it was useless for the present; as it would only impede his flight, he threw it on the ground, and bounded away at full speed, with the terrible animals close at his heels, growling, snarling, and anxious to bury their sharp teeth and needle-like claws in his body.

As we have remarked in another place, Carson was a man of great activity, and he made good progress over the ground. He made for a number of trees, which, providentially were close at hand, while the huge monsters came tumbling along behind, at a rate which was very great, and which caused them to gain upon the fugitive at every bound.

If they overtook him, before he reached the trees, he knew it was over with him, and he ran, as he never ran before. He could hear their elephantine tread, and their labored breathing, as they drew rapidly near him.

Providentially the trees were reached in the nick of time, and with one bound, Carson sprang upward, caught hold of the lower-most branches, and pulled himself up among the limbs in a twinkling, just as the bears brushed by underneath his twinkling legs.

But bears climb trees as well as men, and Kit knew he was still in danger.

Drawing his knife, he immediately began cutting off a strong limb, as a weapon to be used in repelling them. He had barely time to sever the branch, when both bears began the ascent.

One of the tenderest parts of the bear is his nose, and, as soon as the foremost came within reach, Carson gave it a thundering whack directly on its snout.

The bewildered brute, blinked, and shrunk back, and

then hastily slipped back to the ground again. At this juncture the head of the second one came within reach, when the hunter brought a sweeping blow upon its nose, with a vim that made everything ring.

With a snuff of pain and anger, this animal precipitately retreated to the ground, where his companion was just beginning a second attempt. But he was met with as fierce a reception as before, and howling with rage and pain, he withdrew greatly demoralized.

The bears continued the attack for a considerable time, but only to be defeated. The hunter evidently had the advantage of them. Bracing himself among the limbs, he rained down the blows mercilessly and furiously, the instant the tender Indian-rubber like snouts came within reach. So effective were these blows that the bears soon began to lachrymate and cry out with pain, and discomfited by a single unarmed hunter, they finally withdrew and disappeared.

Carson waited until they were fairly out of sight, when he descended and returned to camp, and thus ended what Kit Carson himself considers the narrowest escape of his life.*

• Dr. Petern.

CHAPTER VII.

A DUEL IN THE FAR WEST.

The "golden sun" was setting one beautiful spring day, when a party of hunters encamped some miles outside of Santa Fe, preparatory to their entrance into the town. There was no occasion for hurry in their movements, and they concluded to remain where they were until the next day.

The trappers numbered about a dozen, under the leadership of our old friend Kit Carson, with Buck Buckram as his right hand man. They were returning from an unusually successful hunt in the Rocky Mountains, and were in high glee at the result of the expedition.

They had scarcely halted, when a horseman was seen coming toward them. He was of immense size, and as he drew near was instantly recognized as Captain Shunan, a noted bully, held in universal execration and fear by nearly all who came in contact with him.

He was greeted politely by the trappers, to which he responded gruffly and it was evident to all that he was "spoiling for a fight."

When he dismounted one of the men happened to stand in his way, looking in an opposite direction.

"Don't you know enough to move out of a gentleman's path?" he demanded, giving him a violent kick.

"I didn't see you," was the meek reply, as the poor fellow hastily stepped aside.

"Very well; now you feel me."

Carson was a witness of the outrage, and he felt like kicking the trapper again, because he submitted so tamely to the insult. However, he deprecated a "scene," as

much as anyone, and concluded to hold his peace, if Captain Shunan would do the same.

But the bully was bent on making trouble. The slightest pretext was sufficient for him to insult whosoever came in his way. As he had quite a reputation as a duellist, the majority of the men were careful to keep out of his way.

An unforeseen occurrence brought on a collision between him and Kit Carson. A few minutes after his arrival, a lady and gentleman were seen approaching on horseback; as they came near our hero recognized them as his old friends, Senor Alcada and his daughter Inez.

Carson rode out a short distance to meet them. As a matter of course they were greatly delighted to meet him, and urged him to accompany them to their hac enda, which was but a few miles distant. The young hunter would have been only too glad to accompany them; but he had important interests at stake, and he gave his promise that as soon as the furs and peltries were disposed of in Santa Fe, he would make them a visit.

Waving him a gay farewell the two cantered away toward their home, while Carson returned to his camp. His jubilant spirits were quickly changed to anger when he saw that the bully, Captain Shunan, had slapped a couple of men in the face, and announced his anxiety to encounter any man in the party.

Buck Buckram, who, despite his rough exterior, was really a peaceable man at heart, had parted with the last spark of patience, and a collision between the two was imminent, when Captain Shunan abruptly left him, and advanced to meet Carson as he rode into camp.

"Hello, Kit, are you acquainted with the Senorita Inez?" he demanded in an offensively familiar manner.

"It isn't likely I would have rode out to meet her and her father, unless I had seen them before," he replied, very frigidly, as he attempted to ride by him.

"Hold on!" commanded Captain Shunan, placing his horse directly across his path.

"What do you want?" demanded Carson, his blood beginning to rouse up.

"I want to speak to you about the *bonito senorita*," was the insulting reply.

"She is too good and pure to have her name mentioned by such foul wretches as you."

It was now the turn of Captain Shunan to become infuriated. He demanded an instant retraction of the words uttered by the young scout. The latter simply sneered.

"Do you suppose I would retract to such a miserable coward as you? Do you think I am afraid of you? I despise you as I do the greatest loafer in New Mexico. If you don't like what I say, do what you think best about it."

The bully was pale and quivering with fury. He, before whom all thought white men were glad to retreat,—he, the renowned Captain Shunan,—he was browbeaten to his face, by such a contemptible insignificant little hunter as Kit Carson.

Captain Shunan made no reply, but turned and rode away. Carson understood what this meant, and he coolly sat on his horse among his friends, who had gathered around.

The action of the bully signified that he had determined upon the one method of settling the terrible insult he had received, and that was by the duello.

All the hunters present were ardent friends of Kit, and some of them, actuated by the best of motives, endeavored to dissuade him from meeting the desperate Captain.

"He is a dead shot," said one of them. "I never knew him to miss. I saw him fight two of the most noted duellists in Texas last summer,—one right after the other."

"With what result to them?"

"Killed them both at the first fire."

"See 'yer," said Buck Buckram, advancing close to Carson, and speaking in the confidential whisper of an old friend. Kit leaned over and listened to him.

"I'm afraid this is going to be a bad business for you Kit."

"Why so?" asked the latter with a smile.

"He is a deal older than you, and the fact is, I think he's about *my* age, and I wish you'd jst give me the fan of settling him."

But the young trapper shook his head. Thanking him for his friendship, he added,

"This isn't your fight, Buck; and I am old enough to take care of myself. Have no fans for me."

At this juncture Captain Shunan was observed to wheel his horse on the prairie. He had gone about a fourth of a mile; and, as he turned to come back, it was a challenge for Carson to ride out on the prairie to meet him. Our hero accepted the glove, without a second's hesitation, and rode out at a prancing gallop, while all the trappers looked on, with an interest which it would be difficult to depict.

The sun had just disappeared below the horizon, but enough light remained to serve the contestants in their wicked work.

Captain Shunan was armed with his deadly rifle. Kit Carson had only a single dragoon pistol, having passed his gun into the hands of Buck Buckram, supposing that the fight would take place at close quarters.

Buckram discovered the unequal footing upon which both stood, and rode out after Kit, calling him to come back and take his gun. But the young hunter did not wish it. He turned his head, without checking his horse, and warned the old hunter back.

"Skulp me, if he ain a-tryin' to comm't an aricide!" exclaimed the latter, as he rode back to his comrades. That 'ere skunk comes prancin' up with his rifle, while our man hain't nothin' but that 'ere old pisto', and jst as like as not that ain't loaded. If I should tell him it wasn't I don't b'leve he'd stop, but cac'late on throwing it at him, and knocking his head off."

Buckram was very much disgusted, that he had half a mind to ride out on the prairie, and take a hand in the duel himself.

But this would have been in violation of all principle, and on second thought he dismissed it from his mind.

He had made a resolution, however, to which it was certain he would adhere, in case his young favorite should fall.

He would instantly challenge Captain Shunan, and force him into a fight, if he refused.

"If he backs out I'll shoot him any way," he added to himself, "for the man that sends Kit Carson under has got to do the same for me, or I'll do it for him, and I don't care much which one it happens to be; for that 'ere young scamp has got more into the 'ections of this 'yer old dog, than any chap I ever seed 'cepting my little brother, that had his ha'r raised twenty years ago by the Comanches in Texas."

The old hunter wiped away a tear, pressed down his surging emotions and looked toward the combatants.

The two hunters continued circling about on the prairie for a few minutes, and then Captain Shunan started at a rapid gallop toward Carson.

Prompt and quick as ever, the latter headed toward him, and started at the same speed.

They thundered nearer and nearer each second, until they were face to face, when both reined up their horses so suddenly that they were thrown back on their haunches.

The men glared at each other a moment, and then Carson in his deliberate manner said,

"Captain Shunan, are you looking for me?"

"No," was the reply, "what have I to do with you?"

While this falsehood was upon his lips, he raised his rifle to shoot his antagonist; but Kit was expecting treachery, and quick as lightning he leveled his pistol at Captain Shunan.

The pistol was discharged about a second before the gun, and shattered the fore-arm of the bully, that his ball grazed Carson's scalp, and the powder severely burned his face.

As Shunan was helpless, the duel was ended. The enraged Captain declined all proffers of assistance from the troopers, and rode off toward Santa Fe to have his wound dressed.

He never afterward attempted to brow-beat Kit Carson, and always referred to the little hunter with the greatest respect and admiration.

CHAPTER VIII.

A GRAND FIZZLE

The singular duel which Kit Carson had with Captain Shuman became known in Santa Fe, and when he repaired to the hacienda of Don Alcada, he found that it had preceded him.

His visit, like all that he had made, was delightful and pleasant as it is possible for any such thing to be. He had made quite a sum on his trapping expeditions, but still not enough to satisfy his ambition, and he soon said good bye to the beautiful Senorita, and hastened back to Santa Fe.

Here he joined the renowned Captain Bridger, and with four companions, among whom of course was Buck Buckram, they started for the Black Hills to hunt.

They found the beaver very abundant; but shortly after they got to work, a misunderstanding occurred and the party broke up. Carson and Buck started off on a hunt by themselves. They met with great success and soon after joined the main body of trappers on Green River. Near the middle of summer, the company broke up and started for the rendezvous, which that year was held on the Popoayhi, a branch of the Wind River.

The trapping was resumed in the autumn, and cold weather found them on the Yellowstone, where they went into winter quarters.

Everything went pleasantly until the winter was well

advanced. Carson and Buckram were out hunting one day, shortly after a light fall of snow.

They were walking leisurely along, on their return to camp, when Kit suddenly paused, with an exclamation of surprise and pointed to the ground before them.

"Look there!"

Directly in the snow before them, was the unmistakable prints of several moccasins.

"Blackfeet! I'll bet my ha'r ef it ain't!" was the commentary of the old trapper.

A minute examination of the trail was made, when they became satisfied that they were near a large powerful body of Blackfeet Indians. As the day was quite advanced, and their companions were in imminent danger, they did not deem it best to follow the footsteps, but they instantly returned to camp, and acquainted their friends with what had occurred.

Here a consultation was held, and the conclusion arrived at, that trouble was close at hand. A party of forty men were instantly gathered to seek out the Blackfeet and give them battle.

All eyes centered upon Kit Carson, who had won an enviable fame as a leader, and he was placed in charge of the force, with the understanding that he was to do what he chose and in the manner he chose.

Bright and early in the following morning, the horsemen set out. Carson led the way toward the spot where they had seen the trail the day before.

Just as they reached it, they caught sight of a scouting party of the enemy.

"Let us chase them!" called out Carson, "for they will make for the main body."

The result proved the correctness of his conclusions. In a short time they discovered an immense body of mounted Blackfeet. The impetuous trappers, without pausing to count the consequences, made a dash for them. A spirited fight was the result, and for a time the result was doubtful; but finally the Indians gave way, and retreated.

in good order to an island in the Yellowstone where they had previously built strong barricades.

The trappers deferred their attack until the succeeding morning, when they plunged into the stream, and made for the island fully resolved to dislodge the Blackfeet. To their chagrin, they found that the Indians had quietly withdrawn during the night.

An examination of the ground showed many traces of blood, and a sanguinary trail led to a hole in the ice, where those who had been slain had been shoved into the chilly waters out of sight.

From indications, the trappers became satisfied that the principal Blackfoot village was within a few miles of them, and the redskins would never rest content until they had made the attempt to wipe out this defeat. Under the circumstances, Carson and his men wisely concluded to act principally on the defensive.

Their most experienced mountaineers were posted as sentinels. On a high hill, near camp, they had a trapper stationed all day, while their huts were strengthened by all the means in their power.

They were prompt in their labors, but they were hardly completed, when the sentinel on the top signalled that Indians were in sight. The advance party of the Blackfeet shortly after appeared in sight; but, when they discovered the preparations made to receive them, they waited for the main body to come up.

Three days were occupied in the marshalling the Indians, and when they were all assembled, they numbered fully a thousand. Dressed in all the paraphernalia of the war trail, with their rifles, tomahawks, bows and arrows, and gaily caparisoned steed, they made a strange and impressive sight, well-calculated to strike terror to the hearts to those who were unaccustomed to see them.

When they were all together they executed the frightful war-dance of the American Indians, consisting of the most fearful contortions, whoops and yells, the latter sounding far over the still prairie.

This, like the whirr of the rattlesnake, was a signal to

the trappers that the morrow would witness the final deciding battle between the two forces.

Early the next morning, the Blackfeet approached the trap-works, apparently eager for the battle. A thousand war Indians on horseback, resolutely approaching a small band of trappers in a rude unsightly block-house, make up a thrilling scene, well calculated to inspire one with fearful apprehension.

But the trappers were cool and self possessed and as anxious as the redskins—nay, as it speedily proved they were more so; for, after firing a few harmless shots, they turned and began a retreat.

Disappointed and disgusted, the hunters fired at them, shouted and by means of taunting cries and gesticulation, endeavored to lead them on to the fight. But all in vain. They withdrew to a point about a mile distant, where they held a council of war.

The consultation resulted in the band dividing into two parties, one of which moved off toward the Crow country, while the other rode away in the direction whence they came.

Nothing more was seen of them, and the trappers continued operations, without disturbance, through the remainder of the winter. They then made their way to the rendezvous, where they remained until summer, when the camp broke up.

Back Backham started for Santa Fe, with the majority of the trappers, while Carson, who was bending all his energies to the life work before him, made his way in company with several others to Fort Hall, where he joined a party working under the auspices of the "Northwest Fur Company."

With these trappers, he commenced operations on the Salmon River, following it up to its source, when they descended the Maada down to the Big Snake, and so worked their way back to Fort Hall again.

By this time, they had accumulated an extensive stock of fur, which was disposed of at a fair valuation.

Carson remained at Fort Hall a month, when in company

ny with most of the trappers, he set out to join Captain Bridger, who was still in the country of the Blackfoot Indians. Upon reaching the upper waters of the Missouri, they discovered signs of a party being in advance of them. With fourteen companions, Kit started in advance to ascertain who the band were.

Just at dark, they overtook the trappers and found they were under the charge of Joseph Gale, who was in the employ of Captain Wyatt.

Gale recognized Carson and cordially greeted him, telling him that his command had recently been attacked by Blackfeet, and several of his men desperately wounded.

Kit remained one night with Gale, when they began setting their traps, intending to proceed at such a moderate rate, that the main party would be given time to overtake them.

The men who were engaged in setting traps, had not gone two miles, when they were fired upon by a party of Blackfeet Indians and compelled to retreat. The Indians kept up a hot pursuit, and the wonder was that none of trappers were killed.

The vigilant Carson speedily detected the face of things and ordered the remainder of the party to conceal themselves in the brush so as to give them a warm reception.

The hunters had barely time to obey orders, when the Blackfeet were upon them. A murderous fire was poured in among them, which brought several of the Indians to the ground. The savages recoiled and retreated for a few seconds.

These seconds were just what the trappers needed and gave them time to reload their pieces.

"Keep cool!" called out Kit, "and never mind their yells!"

The next moment, they came forward with the most infernal screeches, and with the apparent determination to annihilate the trappers.

The injunction of their gallant little leader was heeded, and the same deadly fire was rained into them as before.

They retreated again, but almost instantly returned to the attack.

The Blackfeet maintained the attack almost the entire day, charging again and again into the thicket, only to encounter the same deadly fire, until driven to desperation, they set the thicket on fire.

Matters looked terrible for a few minutes; but providentially only the outer shrubbery burned, when the fire died out of itself.

Disappointed, enraged and despairing, the Indians withdrew and retreated, their departure probably hastened by the near report of the main body of the trappers, who shortly after, made their appearance and the two companies united.

After the repeated repulses that the Indians had received, one would naturally suppose that they would let the trappers alone; but they continually annoyed them, and finally became so troublesome, that the entire band of trappers concluded to leave the country.

Accordingly they started, but reaching a small creek, where beaver was plenty, they halted to trap awhile. They had scarcely got to work, however, when one of their number was shot dead, when within sight of camp. Two Blackfeet soon swarmed through the surrounding country, and became so troublesome, that our friends speedily saw that nothing could be accomplished, so long as they were anywhere in the neighborhood. Accordingly they "packed up their traps," and started for the North Fork of the Missouri.

CHAPTER IX.

A FEARFUL ADVENTURE.

It was late in the autumn of the year, and a light snow had fallen on the prairies to the west of Santa Fe. The air was keen, piercing, and whistled over vast plains, like the moaning of winter.

On this same wintry afternoon, a single horseman was riding at an easy gallop, toward the hacienda of Don Alcalá. Cold as was the atmosphere around him, the heart of Kit Carson was warm, for he felt that a cordial welcome awaited him, at the home of the charming Senorita Inez.

There were still a few drifting snow-flakes in the air, and he kept his head bent, so that he saw only a few rods ahead, when he raised his gaze so as to make sure that his animal was following the right direction.

But all at once, Carson reined up his horse with a vague thrill of terror. As he looked about on the prairie, he saw nothing alarming, but he detected in the clear, pure air, a taint of smoke, such as would be made by a burning building.

While the scout was gazing about him with a bewildered air, he caught the outlines of another horseman riding rapidly toward him. Something in the man's appearance struck him as familiar, and he awaited his coming with no little interest.

"Buck Buckram as sure as I live!" called out Carson, as the man came up and extended his hand.

"So it is, Kit," called out the old hunter, as he warmly shook his hand.

"What is the matter, Buck? You don't look as though you were glad to see me."

"To tell the truth, younker," said Buck in a serious manner, calling him by the appellation which he used when his words were of serious import. "I don't know whether I am glad to see you or not,—leastways I'd rather let you in any part of the world than here."

"What do you mean?" demanded Kit in a husky voice the old fear taking possession of him again.

"I s'pose I might as well out with it; there's something wrong up at the hacienda of the Don Alcada."

"What do you mean?"

"Can't speak sartin as to jist what what has been done, but the devil has been raised,—that you may depend on. I was up along the creek this noon when I halted to rest my animal. Jist then I heard the Jecarilla war-whoop,—and you know what that is Kit, and it come from the hacienda. There wan't any mistake about it. Then I heard other whoops and shouts, and the firing of guns, and the Jecarilla screech over again about a dozen times. I started toward the place, when I caught a scream, jist such as a gal would make, ef a red-kim laid hands on her. I started toward that sound, met you, and h'yar I be."

The hunter scarcely had time to finish his explanation, when Kit Carson was speeding away like a thunderbolt toward the hacienda of Don Alcada. Buck Buckram followed after him, but so impetuous was the speed of the young scout, that it was not until half a mile had been passed that the two were side by side again.

Still the snow fell faster and faster, the great flakes falling through the air, and it whirled hither and thither by a thousand tiny whirlwinds. They could scarcely see a dozen rods before them; but both were too familiar with the route to make any blunder, and they hurried forward, never looking to the right or left but straight ahead waiting for the well remembered farm of the hacienda to pop up through the misty, snowy air.

A few minutes later they reached the hacienda, or rather that which remained of it; for it was now a mass of

smouldering ruins. The house and surrounding buildings were burning fiercely, the domestic animals were all killed or dying, and Don Alcada and Inez were missing.

Carson sat on his horse a few minutes in silence, and then wheeling about, he exclaimed.

"COME, BUCK!"

And the next moment both were thundering over the prairie, their horses at a full run.

The rapidly falling snow obscured the trail, but that made no difference to the hunters. They knew the direction taken by the Jicarillas, and the course followed by them was the most direct one.

In the course of half an hour, they struck the trail, and it rapidly freshened, proving that the pursuers were gaining rapidly upon them. Carson leaned over his saddle, and scrutinized the footprints in the thin sheet of snow.

"Only four of them!" he exclaimed, and then added quite bitterly, "O that I had been a few hours sooner——"

"Hist!" interrupted Buckram, suddenly jerking his horse down to a slower gallop, while Kit instantly did the same.

But too late. At that instant a sharp scream reached their ears. Inez Alcada, from the ruthless grip of one of the Apaches, had caught sight of the pursuing horsemen, and her agonized appeal was borne clear and distinct through the snowy air.

"They have seen us!" exclaimed Kit, "and we must make a fight for it. Come on!"

They struck their spurs into the sides of their horses, which plunged ahead with renewed velocity.

The Apaches were well-mounted, and they did the same. They had their prize again, and did not care about endangering their possession of it by fighting so long as there was a chance of escaping by flight.

The pursuers as they tore ahead discovered that there were four Apaches, and that they had but the one prisoner. Senior Alcada they had not taken the trouble to capture. They did not want him, and so he had been shot and left behind. It soon became plain that our friends were gain-

ing. They were the better mounted, and were gradually and surely coming up with the Apaches. The one who led Inez was cunning enough to screen his body with her's.

But the others could not do it, and simultaneously the trappers brought their guns to their shoulders and fired. Two screeches, a spasmodic up-throwing of the arms, and two of the Apaches rolled headlong to the ground. The hunters instantly reloaded, by which time they were so close to the savages that they turned at bay. Before they could bring their rifles to bear, Buckram discharged his piece, and the third fell, while Carson waited his chance with the fourth.

Inez comprehended the situation, and writhing in her captor's grasp, she gave her lover the coveted opportunity. At the crack of his death-dealing weapon, the Jicarilla tumbled to the ground, carrying her with him.

The next instant he was on the ground beside her, but too late to receive her dying smile. The inhuman fiend, finding himself foiled, had thrust his hunting-knife to her heart, and she expired without a word.

The body was carried to the hacienda where she was buried beside her father, and Carson ever avoided the spot. The next day he and Buck Buckram were many miles away, their faces turned to the northward.

CHAPTER X.

THE GUIDE OF THE ROCKY MOUNTAINS.

From the year 1834 to 1842, a period of eight years, Kit Carson filled the position of a hunter for Bent's Fort. This office was no sinecure, it being his duty to keep the garrison, most of the time, consisting of nearly half a hundred men, supplied with animal food. During those eight years, thousands of deer, antelope, buffalo and elk fell by his hand. His duties required his wandering for days and nights over the prairies and mountains; and, during that long period, the extraordinary fact is recorded, that never a word of disagreement passed between him and his employers, and never was the garrison hungry through any remissness of his.

His skill in the use of the rifle came to be looked upon as almost miraculous; and among the Arapahoes, Comanches, Kiowas and Cheyennes, he was always received with the warmest respect, as the greatest pale faced hunter that ever lived.

In 1842, he joined a caravan on its way to Missouri and went in quest of his relatives whom he had not seen for sixteen years. While sauntering about the wharf, he was attracted by a fine looking man, whose eagle eye, and quiet dignity at once interested him. This man was then Lieutenant John C. Fremont, who was just engaging his western expedition, but who had failed to meet a guide that had disappointed him.

Learning this, Carson walked up to him and modestly announced that he had spent a considerable time among the mountains, and he thought he could guide him to any point he desired to reach.

Fremont, in turn, was favorably impressed with the man,

and, after some preliminaries, he was engaged as guide to his first expedition.

At Kansas, the preparations were made for the journey overland, the object of which was to survey the South Pass, and take the altitude of the highest peaks of the Rocky Mountains, in addition to collecting all the collateral information that was possible. It numbered twenty-two Creole and Canadian *voyageurs*, besides several personal friends of Fremont, making twenty-eight in all. The march was begun on the 10th day of June, 1843.

They had scarcely ventured out upon the prairie, when they encountered immense droves of buffaloes, and spent days in the exciting chase. On reaching Fort Laramie, Fremont found a terrible state of affairs existing among the Sioux, through whose country their route led. These Indians, then as now, were a dangerous, treacherous people; and their usual hostility to the whites had been turned into the most implacable fury, by some outrages they had received at the hands of a party of trappers and Snake Indians. They had collected together, until they had an encampment of a thousand lodges, and it was their resolve to massacre every white man whom they encountered.

The future was threatening, and the friendly Indians and hunters did their utmost to dissuade Fremont; but neither he nor Carson hesitated for a moment. The journey was resumed, and they reached the South Pass of the Rocky Mountains, without an attack from their ever dreaded enemies.

Here the real labor began. After making and recording the necessary observations, they began the ascent of the highest mountain peaks. All the objects of the expedition were safely accomplished and the return trip began.

In September 1843, Fort Laramie was again reached, when, as Carson's labors were finished, he bade good-bye to Fremont and his men, after giving the leader his promise that if a second expedition was undertaken, he would join it again in the same capacity.

The death of Santa Alcala was a terrible blow to

Kit Carson; but, as his years grew upon him, and he found his heart sighing for the comforts of a home, he had united himself to a noble hearted Indian woman, who however, remained with him but a short time, when she too, was called away.

She had now been dead a number of years, when in February 1843, he married a beautiful and estimable Mexican lady named Senora Josepha Jarimiila.

The succeeding year he was employed as hunter to accompany Bent and St. Vrain's train of wagons on their way to the United States.

Upon reaching Walnut Creek, Kit and his comrades came upon an encampment of four companies of United States Dragoons, under the command of Captain Cook, who informed them that in his rear a rich train of wagons was traveling belonging to a wealthy Mexican, General Armijo.

For its protection the wagon master, having it in charge, had hired one hundred men. There were rumors of a large body of Texans being on the road for the purpose of murdering and plundering the wagon train, in retaliation for General Armijo's treatment in the case of the noted "Muir Prisoners," but, in order to prevent the deed being done in United States territory, Captain Cook had been ordered by the War Department to guard the property as far as the fording of the Arkansas, which at that time formed the boundary between the two countries.

On parting with the United States, the soldiers became so terrified at the danger of an attack from the Texans, that they offered Carson three hundred dollars, if he would carry a letter to Armijo who was then Governor of New Mexico, and resided at Santa Fe, apprising him of the danger his train was in, and asking for immediate reinforcements.

Carson accepted the offer, and accompanied by Ovens, another noted mountaineer, he set out upon his express ride.

At Bent's Fort, our hero learned that the Utah Indians, who were then bitterly hostile, were all along his route

Mr. Bent, who was always an ardent friend of Carson's, furnished him with a magnificent horse to lead, so that in case of peril he could be ready and fresh upon which to make his escape.

By using great caution, they managed to avoid discovery from the Utah village which lay directly in their route, and a few days later reached Taos, where the letter was handed to the governor of the town, who instantly forwarded it to Santa Fe, while Carson waited at Taos for the answer. He learned while here, that Armijo had become alarmed for the safety of his wagon train, and had already sent a hundred Mexican soldiers to protect it, while he, in command of six hundred more, was speedily to follow. We may as well complete the history of this affair at once, by stating that the hundred soldiers sent out by Armijo, went as far as the Arkansas, when they found they were ahead of the caravan, and started back to meet it; but they had gone but a few miles, when they were attacked by the Texans, who killed every one of them, excepting a single man, he effecting his escape, by catching a Texan horse, during the heat of battle, and making off upon his back. Making all haste, in the direction of Santa Fe, he encountered General Armijo, to whom he communicated his fearful tidings. The latter instantly turned about and retreated, not caring to encounter such terrible fighters.

On the fourth day of Carson's waiting at Taos, an answer reached him from General Armijo, who thinking the scout might reach his train first, sent him back with an answer. As soon as Carson received it, he selected a Mexican boy to accompany him, and they took the road by way of the *Santero de Christo* Pass and Bent's Fort.

The two were journeying quietly along together, when suddenly, and to the complete surprise of Carson, they encountered four Utah warriors riding toward them.

They were some distance away; but, as both discovered each other at the same moment, there was nothing to do but to ride boldly forward, as though nothing like fear was thought of.

While debating what was to be done, the boy said.

"I am only a boy, and the Indians probably will not kill me. At least your life is more valuable than mine; so mount your other horse and make your escape while you have the opportunity."

"No," replied Carson, to the generous boy, "I will not desert you. We will stand our ground; and, if compelled to fight, we will each do our best."

At this juncture, the foremost Indian came up. He recognized the noted scout, and his air was plainly that of one who was sure he had him at his mercy.

With a bland smile, he reached out his hand to grasp that of Carson, while with the other, he attempted to seize his knife. As quick as lightning the hunter dealt him a powerful blow, which stretched him sprawling upon the earth.

The other Indians, seeing what had happened, hastened to the assistance of their companion. Raising his gun to his shoulder, Kit called out.

"The first hostile movement upon your part, and my friend and myself fire."

The savages began shaking the priming in their flintlocks, and threatened all sorts of things. But they knew the consequences, and attempted to direct his attention so as to take him unawares. But Kit was too vigilant, and after considerable manoeuvring, the Indians departed.

Five days after, the two reached Bent's Fort, where they learned that Gen. Armijo's wagon train had passed through in safety, Captain Cook having encountered the Texans in American territory and disarmed them.

Carson also learned that Fremont had passed the Fort a few days before on his second Exploring Expedition. Wishing to see his old commander again, he hurried after him, and, after seventy miles' travel, came up with him.

Kit had no intention of joining the expedition, but Fremont insisted so strongly that he consented.

Colonel Fremont divided his force, sending one division, under the command of Major Fitzpatrick, with the camp equipage, by the more direct route, while the other,

numbering fifteen men, with Carson as guide, started for Thompson's Fork. The object of the expedition was to connect Fremont's exploration with the surveys of Commander Wilkes on the Pacific.

They reached Salt Lake in safety, where, by means of an India rubber boat, they made a careful examination of this remarkable body of water, a detailed report of which has been published long ago.

At Fort Hall, the two expeditions united. Here Fremont again took the lead, going eight days in advance of the main party. Uniting again at the river Dalles, they started for California. As they drew near the Sierra Nevada Mountains, they were seen to be covered with snow, while game was so scarce, that it could not be depended on.

They had the choice before them of crossing the mountains or starving to death. So they pushed on, and upon reaching this mighty chain, the snow was found six feet deep on a level. A halt was made to construct snow-shoes for the party.

With the aid of these conveniences, the advance was sent on to explore the route, and to see how a path was to be broken for the animals. Upon examination it was found that the route would be nearly ten miles through this great depth of snow.

Although it was seventeen years since Carson had set foot in these mountains, he immediately recognized the landmarks, pointing out the verdant valley of the Sacramento, and the Coast Range.

The only means by which they saw any chance of getting their animals through, was by beating the snow hard with mallets. It was fearfully laborious, and fifteen days were occupied in getting through, during which the greater part of the mules starved to death, and the remainder suffered so much from hunger, that they gnawed one another's tails, and the men themselves were forced to live upon the mules that had died, to escape starvation themselves.

The descent of the mountains was now begun. On

reaching the valley below, Carson and six men pushed on to Sulter's Fort to purchase provisions, while the others followed by easy marches. All finally succeeded in reaching their destination more dead than alive, many of them going crazy from indulging too freely in food, after suffering so long.

After fully recruiting their strength, the company started on its return, and reached the United States in August, 1844.

On their homeward journey, they followed up the valley of the San Joaquin, crossing the Sierra Nevada, and following the Coast Range until they struck the Spanish Trail.

Here, while resting in camp, they were visited by a Mexican man and boy named Andreas Fuentes and Pablo Hernandez, who stated that they belonged to a party of Mexican traders, that had come from New Mexico.

There were six of them, including a couple of women, that acted as cooks, who had been left, by their companions, in charge of a band of horses—The rest of the party being off trafficking. They were seeking better pasturage for their animals, and for this purpose had penetrated as far into the country as they dared; and something less than a hundred miles from Fremont's camp had concluded to wait for their friends. The man and boy were on guard over the horses, when their camp was attacked by about thirty Indians, who, wishing to start the animals, sent in a shower of arrows as they advanced. Fuentes and Pablo heard one of their comrades call to them to mount their horses and run for it. They obeyed, and with the whole number of horses, charged directly among the Indians, heedless of weapons. The charge succeeded in breaking the Indian line, through which the two men followed their animals. The Indians let them go, while they turned about to attend to a more murderous task. Having fled some sixty miles, the man and boy started in search of the main body of the traders and while looking for them, came into Fremont's camp. Fuentes feared that a dreadful fate had overtaken his wife, while Pablo was

certain that both his parents were killed. They were nearly frantic with grief, and Kit Carson, tender and sympathizing as he always was, at the sight of grief, volunteered to go with them in search of the Indians.

The horses which Fuentes and the boy had left to come to Fremont's camp, were about thirty miles distant, at a spring which was well known to Carson. Easily making their way thither, the horses were found to be missing, the signs intimating that they had been followed and captured by the Indians.

Carson, who had been joined by Godey, one of the bravest mountaineers, determined to make an attempt to punish the wretches, and they started at once upon the trail of the redskins, who, it was soon discovered, were going at a rapid rate.

While in the height of pursuit, the horse which Fuentes rode, gave out, and at the advice of Carson, he turned back to Fremont's camp, and awaited their return.

This left only two men to pursue thirty Indians, but they never flinched. They kept on until night, which proved of pitchy darkness, and to keep on the scent, Carson and Godey were obliged to lead their horses, and frequently stoop down and feel for the trail. So skilled were they in this peculiar manner of pursuit, that they kept steadily forward, until beyond midnight, when they halted for the purpose of giving their animals rest.

The night was bitterly cold, and their blankets wet, while they did not dare kindle a fire, for fear of the Indians. At the earliest streak of light, they remounted and resumed the pursuit, and when it was fairly light they caught sight of the redskins, about two miles distant, where they were enjoying a feast upon horse steaks, having slain about a half dozen of the animals.

Carson and Godey dismounted, and concealing their horses near by, began crawling in among the horses that were grazing near by, without any guard. This was a delicate and tedious task; but after great persevering labor it was accomplished, and they rose to their feet among the animals. But at this juncture, several of the horses became

frightened, and began rearing and plunging and created such a commotion that the Indians hastened out to learn what the trouble was.

With an ear-splitting yell, the two hunters turned upon the savages. Each sighted out his man. Carson killed his, while Godey missed his. Instantly reloading he brought down his man.

All this time the other redskins were running about in great confusion, occasionally discharging their arrows. They could not comprehend that these two hunters had alone attacked them, but believed that they were an advance guard of a large body, thrown forward as a decoy. Under this belief, they scattered as though attacked by a force of ten times their own, and the trappers were left masters of the field.

The remaining horses were collected together, and Carson and Godey made their way toward the late camp of the Mexicans to learn what had become of them. They found the bodies of the two men terribly mangled, they being entirely naked and bristling with arrows driven into every part of their person. No traces of the woman could be found, but it was easy to understand what their fate had been.

Colonel Fremont thus refers to this exploit.

"Their object accomplished, our men gathered up all the horses, fifteen in number, returned upon their trail, and rejoined us at our camp in the afternoon of the same day. They had rode about one hundred miles in the pursuit and return, and all in thirty hours. The time, place, object and numbers considered, this expedition of Carson and Godey may be considered among the boldest and most disinterested which the annals of western adventure, so full of daring deeds, can present. Two men, in a savage desert, pursue day and night an unknown body of Indians into the depths of an unknown mountain—attack them on sight, without counting numbers—and defeat them in an instant—and for what? To punish the robbers of the desert, and to avenge the wrongs of Mexicans whom they did not know. I repeat, it was Carson and Godey who

did this—the former an American, born in Kentucky; the latter a Frenchman by descent, born in St. Louis, and both trained to western enterprise from early life.”

Kit Carson completed his duties as guide of Fremont's Second Expedition, in a manner which elicited the admiration and commendation of the leader; and, in the spring of 1845, he, in conjunction with an old friend and hunter, adopted the farmer's life, as the one most suited to their tastes.

They selected a place nearly fifty miles east of Taos, which they stocked with animals and the necessary agricultural implements, sowed large quantities of grain, and began building their houses.

Kit had just got fairly to work, with everything moving along smoothly, when an expressman arrived at his rancho from Colonel Fremont, stating that he had started on his Third Expedition, and he claimed the fulfillment of Carson's promise to join him as a guide.

It was a heavy sacrifice for the guide to “break up,” but he did not hesitate. After considerable difficulty he found a man, willing to pay half the value of his property and selling out to him, Kit started for Bent's Fort, where he found the “Pathfinder” awaiting him.

The journey was begun at once, progressing very favorably, under the admirable guidance of Carson. The adventures were a repetition of those of the previous expedition, Fremont separating his command, when he deemed it prudent. He, with his party, traveled up the Sacramento and encamped near Tamath Lake. While here, news reached them of the declaration of war, between the United States and Mexico.

The startling news was sent Fremont by Lieutenant Gillespie of the United States Marines, who came through with an escort of six men, until his horse had given out, when he halted and sent forward two of his most reliable men, with the letter to Fremont. The latter, when he had read the communications, fully appreciated their importance, and the imminent peril in which Gillespie and his companions were placed.

With ten picked men he set out at once to his rescue, leaving orders for the others to follow as rapidly as possible. Sixty miles travel, and he met the Lieutenant and his men coming in. A site was selected near at hand, and the whole party encamped.

Fremont sat up late that night reading and writing letters—when he retired it was past midnight. Kit Carson and Owens—his partner in the farming business—had lain down near the fire, with their blankets wrapped around them, for the night was cold.

Shortly after Fremont had lain down, Carson heard a noise that sounded like the stroke of an ax. Springing to his feet, he found that Indians were in the camp. Reaching out for his rifle, he gave the alarm to his companions. But two of them were already dead, having been tomahawked while they slept.

As Carson left the dangerous light of the fire, he saw several redskins approaching. There lay near him four Delaware Indians, belonging to the expedition, who sprang up at the alarm. One of them caught up a rifle which was not his own, and attempted to fire it,—not knowing that the lock was broken so as to render it useless. He stood up bravely, cocking, aiming and pulling the trigger, until five arrows had been driven into his breast, when he succumbed and fell.

By this time the camp was fully aroused and the Indians were driven off, but not until they had killed three and wounded one of Fremont's men.

CHAPTER XL

AN HEROIC PERFORMANCE.

Fremont having been officially informed of the declaration of war, by the United States against Mexico, determined to return to California.

He began his work by traveling around Lake Tlamath. When he encamped, it was nearly opposite the place, where his three men had been killed by the Tlamath Indians. The men were so impressed with the loss of their companions, that they asked permission to avenge their death. Nothing loth, Fremont sent Carson ahead, with ten picked men, with orders to do what he chose in that way; and if he needed reinforcements to send him word.

Carson moved forward rapidly, and speedily discovered a fresh trail, which led toward their village. Following up the scent, they soon came in sight of the village, numbering fifty lodges, with a force of about one hundred and fifty Indians.

From the excitement in the village it was evident that the redskins were aware of their intentions, and it was necessary that instant word should be sent to Fremont for reinforcements; but, after a moment's consultation, Carson determined to make the attack at once. The next instant the hunters charged among them, laying about them right and left, while the savages fought with great desperation. But a panic soon spread among them, and they scattered and fled.

The hunters pursued them some distance, and then returned and burnt all the lodges. As the flames spread, Fremont caught sight of the smoke, and knew that Carson was fighting with the Indians. He pushed on as rapidly as possible, but, of course, arrived too late to take part in the affray.

Encamping about two miles from the village, Fremont sent back twenty men to watch the ruins, as no doubt a number of the Indians would return during the night. The party had been there but a short time, when they discovered about fifty redskins in the bright moonlight.

According to directions, word was sent to Fremont, who with six companions, among whom was Kit Carson, hastened back to the scene. On reaching the ruins, they saw only one Indian wandering about the ground. A dash was made for him, and when within a dozen feet, Carson reined up and raised his rifle to fire. But the gun snapped, and the savage instantly drew his arrow to its head, with intention of driving it through Carson's body. The latter threw himself on the side of his horse to avoid it, but he could not escape his aim. A moment more would have been the last of the renowned mountaineer, when Fremont spurred his horse forward and rode down the savage, his arrow going high in the air, while a shout from one of the hunters ended his career at the same moment.

Learning that hostilities had commenced, Fremont marched upon Sonoma, a Mexican town, and captured it, and sent out two messengers to apprise the American settlers that they might flee to it as a place of refuge. The messengers were captured by General Castro and massacred. Fremont pursued the Mexican general and his force for a long distance, when finding it impossible to overtake them, he returned to Sonoma.

The settlers now flocked around Fremont, who, finding quite a little army at his disposal, he marched upon Monterey; but, upon reaching it, he found that it had already surrendered to Commodore Sloat and the American squadron. The Commodore having left the country, the command devolved upon Commodore Stockton.

A consultation being held, Fremont was taken by ship to San Diego to obtain animals, with which to march upon Los Angeles. With one hundred and fifty men, he then marched upon the town. Camping in sight of it, he awaited the arrival of Stockton, when the combined forces

marched upon Los Angeles, and captured it, with scarcely any resistance.

On the 15th of September, 1846, Kit Carson, in command of fifteen men was sent as a bearer of despatches to Washington. He was instructed to do all in his power to make the journey in sixty days.

He pressed rapidly forward, showing his usual skill in avoiding the different bands of hostile Indians until the sixth of October, when he came in sight of the advance guard of General Kearney. Reporting himself to the general, the latter concluded to send another man to Washington with the despatches, while he took Kit Carson as a guide for himself.

Near the middle of October, General Kearney and his command left the Rio Del Norte, in New Mexico. Warner's Rancho was reached on the third of December, from which place the line of march was taken upon San Diego.

While moving in this direction, word reached them that a strong band of Mexican Californians had entrenched themselves on the route, intending to attack and annihilate them.

Kearney continued his advance, until within fifteen miles of the encampment, when he sent forward a reconnoitering party, which came back with the intelligence that the Mexicans had established themselves in an Indian village. General Kearney determined to attack them at once.

When within a mile of the enemy, the advance guard of the Americans came upon a small outlying force of Mexicans, and a sharp skirmish at once began. The out-post was driven in with the loss of several of their number. A force of twenty-five men, Carson being among the number, with two companies of United States Dragoons, charged upon the enemy, with the intention of breaking their centre.

While the charge was being made, Carson, who was in the advance, was so unfortunately as to have his horse stumble, throwing him with such force that his rifle was broken and rendered useless. Ere he could rise to his feet, the

whole command behind galloped over him, but, almost miraculously he escaped unharm d.

When they had passed, he rose to his feet, and seeing a dead dragoon lying near, he ran to him, seized his gun and cartridge box, and plunged forward into the thickest of the fight. After a bloody struggle, in which the leader of the dragoons and several of his men were killed, the Mexicans were dislodged. They were followed by the Americans; but, sad to tell, many of the latter were mounted upon mules, which became ungovernable, and the men became so separated that the Mexicans turned upon them; and, out of the forty dragoons, thirty-six were either killed or badly wounded.

General Kearney, seeing his officers and men being massacred, drew his sword, placed himself at the head of his remaining forces; and, although badly wounded himself, he succeeded in routing them. At this juncture one of his officers arrived on the ground, with ten mountain howitzers. Before he could unlimber his guns, nearly every man was shot down. Following up their advantage, the Mexicans charged; and, by means of the unerring lasso, captured the horses, and made off with one of the pieces. Goading the horses forward, for several hundred yards, they halted, and turned the howitzer upon the Americans. But fortunately they could not succeed in discharging it.

Defeated and disorganized, the Americans retreated, took refuge at a point of rocks, where they were permitted to remain unmolested for the time.

General Kearney now gave his attention to his dead and wounded. All night long they were engaged in burying their fallen, and attending to those who needed their attention. The General held a council of war, and determined to move on at daylight in the hope of meeting reinforcements. Previous to the battle he had sent three men with dispatches to Commodore Stockton at San Diego, but they were captured by the Mexicans.

When Gen Kearney and his men were within five hundred yards of the water, where they intended to encamp, the Mexicans charged down upon them with such fury,

that, after a short stand, they were obliged to give way, and they retreated to a hill, some distance to the left. Here they halted, resolved to decide the battle, but the wary enemy refused to make the attack.

At this time, the Americans were used up, and the situation of General Kearney was critical in the extreme. They were obliged to live upon their mules, and had scarcely enough water to support life. The brave and confident waited near them, ready to massacre the entire command, whenever they moved out from their position.

In this dark hour, when the brave Kearney was almost ready to despair, Kit Carson stepped forward, and volunteered to go to Commodore Stockton at San Diego and bring help. Lieutenant Beale, then of the United States Navy, instantly offered to accompany him.

It was the only thing that offered any help, and General Kearney gladly accepted it. The two gallant men waited until night, and then made their preparations, which were simple enough.

When it was fairly dark, they passed outside the camp, and, on their hands and knees, began creeping stealthily forward. They found that despite the greatest caution, their shoes would often make a noise. Accordingly they took them off and put them in their belts.

Slowly and patiently they crawled forward, carefully avoiding the sentinels, who were found to be three rows deep. When they came in sight of the shadowy figures of the sentinels, they made their way insidiously around them and crawled along as before.

They were moving along in this laborious manner, when they heard the sudden tramp of horses feet, and the next instant a horseman dashed up and halted within a yard or two of them. Carson who was slightly in advance, lightly touched Lieutenant Beale, as a warning to him of the danger. Both sank flat upon their faces, and during this critical moment, they lay so still, that Carson affirmed he could hear the beating of his companion's heart.

The Mexican lit his cigarette, remounted and rode off, while the two scouts resumed their progress.

For two miles they made their way in this manner, when having passed the last row of sentinels, they rose to their feet. To their dismay, they found that they had lost their shoes.

To avoid pursuit, Carson selected a circuitous route, which led them over soil full of the prickly pear. Their feet were lacerated and pierced at almost every step. Yet all that night, and the next day and night, without food of any kind, they pressed forward, until the succeeding day was nearly gone, when they reached San Diego, and gave their message to Commodore Stockton, who sent a hundred and seventy men to the relief of General Kearney. By making forced marches, these reached him in time, and brought the command safely in.

Kit Carson remained several days at San Diego to recruit, while Lieutenant Beale was put on board the frigate Congress for medical treatment. So great were his sufferings, that for a time he lost his reason, and it was not until two years after, that he felt himself entirely recovered.

CHAPTER XII.

KIT CARSON'S JOURNEY TO WASHINGTON.

Los Angeles was captured by Kearney and Commodore Stockton, when the memorable quarrel occurred between these two officers, as to whom right ally belonged the command of the United States forces in California, and which, from Fremont acknowledging the Commodore as the rightful commander, caused his arrest and court-martial.

Kit Carson took no part in this unfortunate estrangement, except to leave Kearney's command and join Fremont's. In March, 1847, he was sent, as a bearer of important dispatches, to Washington. Lieutenant Beale, who was still very weak, accompanied him. He almost succumbed to the hardships of the journey, Carson being compelled for the first twenty days to lift him on and off his horse.

On the river Gila the party was attacked by Indians, who fired a great many arrows into camp; but, as it was very dark, the men escaped by holding their saddles over their heads. They did not return the fire, as there was little prospect of accomplishing anything, and they only would have exposed their situation.

The four thousand miles were traveled in three months, the Scout arriving in Washington on the evening train. It was dark when he stepped out on the depot, when he was accosted by Mrs. Fremont, who stated that she recognized him from her husband's description, and who insisted that he should share her hospitality while in Washington.

Carson remained some time in the national capital, where he received a great deal of attention and kindness from Colonel Benton and other leading men. President Polk ap-

pointed him lieutenant in the rifle corps of the U. S. Army, and placing him in command of fifty volunteers, ordered him back again across the continent as bearer of dispatches.

At Fort Leavenworth Carson took charge of his men. Here, at the same time, he learned that the Comanches were at war with the whites. With his escort, however, he reached the celebrated "Point of Rocks," before he was disturbed by them.

This has always been a favorite resort for the Indians of the plains. When our hero reached it, he discovered a large train of wagons on their way to New Mexico. A large guard was stationed during the night, but nothing was seen of the Indians until morning, when a large party made an attack, capturing twenty-six horses and all the cattle.

Carson's camp was near at hand, and detecting the trouble, he and a number of men made a charge and recaptured the oxen, but the daring and active Comanches got away with the others. A number of the savages had been killed, but, as they were tied upon their horses, they did not fall into the hands of the hunters.

The march was resumed, and the same day, Carson and his party reached Santa Fe. Here he left his escort of fifty men, and with sixteen others continued the journey, until he reached a tributary of the Virgin River, where he came upon a village of three hundred Indians.

Carson had learned that a short time before, these very Americans had murdered seven Americans. He therefore put on a bold front and gave the Comanches to understand, in answer to their request to come into camp and have a "talk," that he would have nothing to do with them; and, upon their first attempt to approach, he would pour a volley into them.

He gave them a few minutes to take themselves off, and they refusing, he kept his word, killing one and wounding several others. This prompt display of "verve" had the desired effect, and the redskins lost no time in making themselves "scarce."

The journey was resumed, but in a short time, they were

in want of food, and being unable to find any game, were compelled to live upon their mules. From Los Angeles, Carson in command of twenty-five dragoons was ordered to Tejon Pass to intercept the caravans of Indians that were continually passing through here, and to satisfy himself that their property was not the proceeds of robberies upon the settlers.

The winter was thus spent, and in the spring he was ordered again to Washington with dispatches. It did not take him long to make his preparations, and, in charge of an escort he started, everything progressing finely until they reached Grand River, where a rather singular accident happened to them.

They were crossing the river on rafts, when that of one division of the men became unmanageable, and finally overturned the men and baggage into the water.

Only by extraordinary efforts did the soldiers escape with their lives, while their baggage was irrecoverably gone. The men made their way back to the shore, whence they started, where with their wet, drizzling cloths, they spent a wretched night.

Early the next morning, one of Carson's men recrossed with an ax, with which a new raft was soon made, and the party reunited. Upon making an examination it was found that several saddles and half a dozen rifles were lost. The owners of these were compelled to ride bare-back, without weapons, through a hostile country, until they could reach some settlement, when they could make good their losses.

Everything, however, went well until they reached the neighborhood of the Mexican towns. Here they encountered several hundred Apaches and Utah Indians.

Giving unmistakable signs of hostility, Carson placed his men in order, while he informed the Indians that, upon the first attempt to approach closer, he would fire into them.

Among the numerous Indians, there were several who recognized Kit Carson, and who knew that he would be as good as his word. They lingered for a while, debating with

themselves whether to offer battle or not, but finally they departed, without firing a shot.

It was now late in the day, but, in order to place all the distance possible between his men and the Indians, Carson resumed the march, until the jaded and worn-out condition of his animals warned him to give them their much-needed rest.

He still was in great danger from the Indians, when he met a party of volunteers who were searching for the very same Indians, to punish them for some outrages they had committed.

The next day, Carson reached Taos, where his family resided. He spent several days of purest pleasure in their society, and then resumed the journey, and then made his way to Santa Fe. Here he learned from the colonel commanding the United States forces, that his appointment as lieutenant by President Polk had not been confirmed by Congress.

Many of Kit's friends, upon hearing this, urged him not to carry the dispute any further; but the modest little fellow replied that it would be dishonorable to act thus, and he would go forward if it cost him his life.

And go he did. It was a bitter disappointment to him, and it proved afterward that the man appointed in his place "fizzled out" completely. But he swallowed his disappointment, and turned resolutely to the duty before him.

The colonel informed him, further, that the Comanches were unusually hostile, and that they were roaming over the country in parties of several hundreds, on the lookout to intercept all parties that they dare attack. They were scattered along the Santa Fe road, and had already committed many depredations.

The Comanches are among the bravest and most dangerous tribes of the south-west; and, when Carson learned that he had to encounter them, he determined to avoid the usually followed trail, and make one of his own. He reduced the number of his escort to ten, these being all true and trusty men. With these, he returned to Taos.

where he remained several days with his family, when he began his final march.

At first, he travelled to the northward, until he found himself in a tract of country rarely visited by the Indians, there he altered his route and took a direct course for the Bijoux River, a small tributary of the Platte, which he followed down stream.

A few miles from the Platte, he left the Bijoux, and struck across the country and finally reached Fort Kearney. At Fort Leavenworth, he left his escort and hastened on alone to Washington. Handing over his dispatches, he immediately set out on his return to New Mexico, where he arrived in October 1849.

CHAPTER XIII.

A TERRIBLE EXPERIENCE.

We have shown Kit Carson's services as Guide to Fremont's three expeditions. The casual reader is in danger of under estimating these services, and that he may see what his real worth was in this capacity, we here introduce, by way of episode, a brief account of Fremont's French Expedition, in which he employed another mountaineer as guide, an old man well known in the West as 'Bill Williams.'

Owing to differences between Commodore Stockton and General Kearney, as to who was the superior authority, Fremont was court-martialed; and, feeling that he had been unjustly treated, he resigned his position in the service. The expedition, therefore, of which we desire to speak more particularly, was projected solely by himself, and every item of expense was personally assumed by him.

Fremont had long seen the vast advantages to be gained by a national road to the Pacific, and this journey was undertaken for the purpose of discovering the obstacles that would be encountered in the building of such a road—and in order the more fully to determine this, he concluded to undertake his expedition at the dead of winter.

His command numbered thirty-three men, every one of which had served under him. They were provided with rifles, and one hundred and twenty mules, and all that experience had proved necessary in such a perilous undertaking.

At the end of November, 1848, they reached the Pa-

bles, on the Arkansas, which stood at the base of the mountains they were obliged to cross. Here they found the snow several feet deep, and they were compelled to dismount and labor through it. After a long and toilsome journey, they reached the delightful valley of San Luis, upon the opposite side.

Here a halt was made, to discover the pass by which they were to cross the main chain of mountains. With his powerful telescope, Fremont discovered a broad and snowy depression, which resembled a pass, but which, at the same time, he was almost certain was not. Several of his hunters affirmed that it was, and his guide, Williams, expressed himself as certain on the point. Still, knowing the terrible consequences of a mistake, Fremont argued with him for over an hour, and then unfortunately yielded his convictions against his judgment, and the party began the ascent of the mountain.

The air was intensely cold, and the ascent very steep. The sharp, cutting wind shrieked about their ears, and when they halted at night, they had reached a point above the level of vegetation. So cold was the weather, that only by the greatest care were their animals prevented from freezing to death.

At daybreak the journey was resumed. The sun was found to increase in depth, and the air grew colder and colder. It was found absolutely impassable for the animals. A halt was made, and the men, with wooden mallets, packed and beat down the snow in front, so that the mules could follow them. This was very trying and laborious, but the men persevered until, at length, the top of the mountain was reached.

Here Fremont's worst fears were realized. No pass was visible, and their guide had committed a fatal blunder.

A violent snow-storm set in, and the air was so filled with the whirling, drifting mass, that the men could scarcely see each other at a dozen feet distance. It swept in such masses, driven by the hurricane, that the mules were obliged to force their way against it, and the party halted for the night.

The weather became fearfully cold, and in the morning it was found that the one hundred and twenty mules had all frozen to death ! To advance or to remain where they were, was sure death, and flinging their baggage from them, they turned about, and making their way to the ascent, began a hurried retreat down the opposite side.

Through the blinding, whirling storm, they pressed their way, until they reached a mass of rocks, which tempered the wind somewhat. Here they halted, kindled a fire and took a short rest.

But there was no hope in remaining where they were. They would soon freeze and were soon destitute. Four of the most trustworthy men were selected by Fremont, and sent to the nearest Mexican settlement for relief. This was ten days travel distant, and Fremont gave them double that time, in which to perform the journey, while the men prepared, as best they could, to pass the dreadful time, which must intervene, before they could expect their return.

Day after day passed, until sixteen had worn away, when unable to remain any longer, Fremont with three companions, set out to meet the relief, which he supposed by this time, must be near at hand.

Six weary dreadful days, the party labored through the snow, when they upon the camp of their friends. They had gone thus far, and then given out. Three famished, hideous looking skeletons lay upon the snow. They were Creutzfeldt, Brackenbridgs and Williams the Guide. The first of these was so emaciated and changed that Fremont did not recognize him, until his name was pronounced.

They were starving and could have lived but a short time longer.

"Where is King?" asked Fremont.

One of the men raised himself up by a violent effort and pointing off in the snow, replied.

"There he is!"

The "Pathfinder" saw a dark object lying in the snow, and making his way to it, found their companion, cold

and still, lying where he had frozen to death several days before.

The endurance and courage of Fremont were wonderful. He raised up the three men by cheering words, and by the assistance of the horses, they were carried to the Red River Settlement, which was reached about the middle of January, the distance that was traveled through the snow being nearly two hundred miles.

The next morning after reaching this town, Fremont and Godey rode out to the Rio Honda and Taos, in quest of animals and supplies, and on the second evening after their return while they reached Red River, Godey came back to the place with thirty animals, provisions, and four Mexicans, with which he set out for his camp on the following day.

The men that had been left behind in the snow, had remained there for seven days, when they started down the river in the hopes of meeting the relief.

After they had traveled about two miles, one of the company named Moore—a Comanche Indian—gave way to a feeling of despair, and begged several of the company to shoot him. They refusing to do so, he turned back to camp, when he folded his arms, and stoically awaited the approach of death, which soon came to his relief.

They were twenty-two in all and they labored along for several miles further, when another man threw away his gun and blanket, and lying down in the snow also died. Two Indian boys who were in the rear, rolled up the man in his blanket and buried him in the snow.

The second day after this one of their number became delirious and dashing away through the snow was never seen again.

On the same day another of the poor fellows, gave up in despair, and refused to proceed further. They built him a fire, and one of their number, who was also in a dying condition, remained with him.

By this time matters had become so desperate that Hatter, the leader of the party determined to break it up.

"I have done all I can for you," said he. "The only

hope that remains for you is that of meeting the relief party. We will therefore scatter, and each of us do his best to reach them. If I am to be eaten by you, I shall be found travelling when I die."

The party accordingly broke up.

With Haler continued five others beside the two Indian boys. In a short time Rohrer became despondent. Haler endeavored to encourage him by calling to mind his wife and children, and urged to bear up for their sakes. They were in hourly expectation of meeting the relief party, who, at the most, could be at no great distance from them.

Rohrer held out as long as he could, but finally fell blind.

"Go on and leave me," said he to his companions. "I think I shall be able to overtake you at night."

The others agreed that if any of them gave out, the remaining ones would not wait for him to die, but would build a fire for him and push on. At night, one of the other parties encamped within a few hundred yards of Haler's with the intention of remaining where they were until relief came to them, and in the meantime to live upon those who should die.

In the evening Rohrer came up and stayed with the men, but the next day he and a companion wandered off and died.

The next evening, Haler and his party pushed on. After a few hours' time Hubbard gave out. A fire was built by him, and the others pressed on without waiting for him to die. Two miles further on, another one gave out. The same mercurial office was performed for him, and the survivors dragged themselves along.

In the afternoon the two Indian boys passed all the others, and just at nightfall the discharge of their guns was heard.

This was understood as a signal that the relief party had been met, and the hearts of all lit up with joy; but human nature could sustain them no longer, and they ~~came down~~ where they were until daylight.

Early the next day the two parties encountered, and when they met, they cried like children. They turned back, and all who were not dead were picked up and carried to Santa Fe.

CHAPTER XIV.

KIT CARSON AS INDIAN AGENT.

Back again at Taos, with his cherished wife and children around him, Carson resolved to remain in their society as long as he could consistent with his duty.

The time wore on, and he enjoyed the purest happiness of his life, in his quiet home; but, as time passed, rumors reached him of the hostility of the Apaches, and he soon found indeed that this formidable tribe of Indians had dug up the hot hat, and were doing the United States soldiers, who were then stationed in New Mexico to defend the settlers.

Colonel Beall at this time was commanding the district, and had his head quarters at Taos. Knowing the courageous and treacherous nature of the Apaches, he saw that the only way to deal with them, was by promptly punishing them wherever found.

Accordingly he sent one of his officers with a suitable force to overtake and chastise them. They followed them to the mountains, where they found the snow so deep that they turned back and gave up the pursuit.

Colonel Beall at once reorganized his command, taking charge of it himself and employing Kit Carson as his guide. Taking the same route, as the unsuccessful party, they waded in among the snow-clad mountains, and after great difficulty, forced their way through.

A long search was now made, but it resulted in nothing. The active Indians kept well out of the way, and the expe-

dution, finding their provisions running out, were compelled to turn about and start him over again.

As they emerged from the "Sangre de Christo Pass," on their return, they came suddenly upon a village of the very Indians they were seeking—the Apaches.

The very moment the Indians were discovered, Carson had the charge sounded; but their animals were so jolted out, that it did not result to much. A large amount of plunder was taken, but only two Apaches were captured. Fortunately, however, these proved to be two important chiefs.

These personages were given a good "talk," and to show the savages the generosity of our government, they were released, to renew their exasperating outrages upon the settlers.

In the following February, Colonel Beall learned that a large body of Indians were assembled on the Arkansas who held a large number of Mexicans in captivity. Taking Kit Carson as guide, and two companies of dragoons, he set out for the purpose of reclaiming them.

In due time he reached the Arkansas, where he found a force of two thousand Indians. They had met to hold a council, and to have a talk with their agent. The latter who was an experienced mountaineer, told Carson that there was such an ill-feeling among the savages, that it would be useless to demand the prisoners, as the savages certainly would not yield, and it would be impossible to compel them to accede to the demand.

Colonel Beale at first was disposed to attempt extreme measures, but he was finally persuaded to give over this thought.

Back again at Taos, Kit Carson and his old friend Maxwell selected a suitable place, and erected themselves a beautiful home. The place is called Rayado, and is as charming a residence as could be selected.

Here Kit settled down with his family, feeling that as age was creeping over him, it was time that he made provision for his family, for a more devoted husband and father than the renowned scout ever was.

But such a man, in a half-civilized country like New Mexico, is always sure to be in demand for different services.

He had been settled here but a short time, living the life of a farmer, when news reached him of a most horrible murder having been committed by the Apaches.

A merchant, by the name of White, who was in business in Santa Fe, had made a journey to the United States for the purpose of purchasing goods. He accompanied the train, traveling in his private carriage, with his wife and only child.

After reaching a point, where he concluded there was no further danger, the merchant started ahead of the train, so as to reach Santa Fe, as soon as possible.

He had gone but a short distance, when he was attacked by the Apaches, who at the first fire, killed every man in the carriage, while the wife and child were reserved for the terrible fate of captivity.

The child was tomahawked before her eyes, and then thrown into Red River, near which the tragedy had been enacted.

When news of this barbarous outrage reached Taos, a command was instantly raised for the purpose of rescuing Mrs. White and avenging the massacre of her family. Two of the mountaineers, Leroux and Fisher went with the party as guides.

Between the partisans of Leroux and Carson, quite a feeling existed at this time, many of the former claiming his superiority over our hero, although the two men were on the best of terms and shared none of the feeling. As soon as the company began forming, Kit tendered his services; but to the surprise of all, he was given a subordinate position, under the command of Leroux, whose superior, more than once, he had proved himself to be.

Kit Carson, although he keenly felt the slight, smothered his feelings, and took the position assigned him without a word.

All being ready the party set out at once, and in good season reached the place where the fearful crime had been

committed. All around were strewn boxes, trunks and baggage, and the blood here and there, told in eloquent terms of the dreadful murder which had been perpetrated.

After considerable search, the trail taken by the Indians was found, and the pursuit begun. It proved one of the most difficult trails imaginable to follow. The party of the Apaches, which, in the first place was quite numerous, kept breaking up and dividing, the trail, as a consequence, being greatly mixed up and confused.

But the skill of the hunters enabled them to keep to the right one. Every now and then, they discovered bits of dress in the camp, proving that they were on the right track.

For twelve days, the rescue party hurried over this trail, without catching the first outline of an Indian. But they steadily gained, and soon saw by unerring signs that they were close upon the savages.

All at once, Kit Carson, who was in the advance, caught sight of the Indian camp, and the next moment, the Apaches themselves. His experience told him that not a moment was to be lost.

"Come on quick! Don't waste a minute!" he shouted, turning to those behind him.

At the same moment he struck his horse into a full run toward the Indians. As he thundered along, he saw that the Apaches had taken the alarm, and the great commotion showed that they were making hurried preparations for departure. If the blow were struck at once, there was some prospect that it would prove most effective.

Suddenly Kit Carson turned his head, and to his dismay saw that the command, obeying the suggestion of their guide had halted to *deliberate*, he believing that the Indians wished to hold a parley.

Our hero was therefore compelled to rein up his horse, as he was acting under orders. At the same moment a spent ball struck the leader in the breast, and rendered him speechless, and, at first, it was believed that he was mortally wounded. But in a few moments he ~~re-acted~~ ~~and~~ instantly ordered the charge to be made.

The order was obeyed, but it was too late. Upon reaching the camp, there was found but a single Apache, who was instantly riddled with bullets; but his guilty companions had fled.

Mrs White seeing her rescuers, had attempted to rush to them, but was shot by an arrow, and was dying as the hunters came up. Death was a relief to her, for she had suffered such fiendish outrages, that she could never have recovered.

The leader of this expedition admitted afterward, that had Carson been the guide, or even had his suggestion been carried out, the unfortunate lady would have been rescued.

All saw and admitted the mistake, although Kit Carson, generous as he always was, never failed to make an excuse for the conduct of the leaders of the expedition.

The attempt, however, in one sense, was a success. All their provisions and camp equipage were destroyed, and the Apaches were pursued for several miles, when another warrior was killed, several wounded, and three children captured. The chase was kept up until the horses, one after another, broke down, when it was given over.

It was rather curious that among the camp equipage was found a "blood and thunder" novel, in which Kit Carson figured as a terrible hero, who had performed prodigies of valor. It amused none more than it did the great mountaineer himself.

On their way back to Taos, the expedition was overtaken by a tremendous snow storm, accompanied by a biting wind which completely bewildered the men, who wandered aimlessly about, until they reached a grove of timber, where they took refuge until the storm was over, when they safely made their way home again.

Kit Carson made his way to Rayado, where he lived some time on his farm, until the Apaches, in the spring, attacked some herdsman who were guarding the horses belonging to a party of ten dragoons, and wounding the man, made off with the animals.

On learning the facts Kit Carson, three settlers, and the

dragons started in pursuit. So rapid were their movements that after going twenty-four miles, they caught sight of them. Four of the dragons' horses gave out, and they were left behind. The Indians run over a score, were killed, and a desperate running fight began.

Five Indians were killed, and nearly all the stolen animals were recovered; and the success of the enterprise was mainly due to the daring skill and courage of Carson.

In the spring of 1850, Carson and Gould made a journey of five hundred miles to Fort Laramie, with fifty head of mules and horses, where they remained a month, disposing of them to the emigrants and settlers.

The return journey was accomplished in safety, and with few adventures, although danger hovered over them all the way.

CHAPTER XV.

Kit Carson had scarcely reached his home at Rayado, when he learned that during his absence the Apaches had come in and stole all the horses belonging to the settlement. At the time of the outrage, the soldiers stationed there were too few in number to attempt pursuit, and application was made to the commanding officer of the territory, who sent a force which recovered nearly all the stolen stock and returned it to the owners.

Our hero now devoted his principal time to his farm. The land was well watered and timbered, and of great fertility, and everything went along as charmingly as he could desire. Only once during the summer was his labor interrupted, and then by an incident which shows Carson in such a favorable light that we cannot refuse to give it.

An American named Fox had engaged an escort to two gentlemen named Brevort and Weatherhead, to accompany them over the plains. This Fox, believing the two men had an abundance of money, had selected his men for the purpose of murdering them, when fairly out upon the plains.

Before starting, Fox visited Taos, for the purpose of engaging a desperate and well-known villain to accompany him; but the desperado, who ordinarily delighted in such business, refused to go. True to his instincts, he waited until he felt sure that Fox and his party had advanced far enough to make sure of their inhuman purpose, when he revealed the plot to a few of his confidants.

Accidentally an army officer stationed in Taos at the

time, heard it, and he at once hurried to Kit Carson, who, at once took the responsibility of preventing so diabolical an outrage. He knew the desperado Fox, very well, and on learning the route he had taken, he concluded that it was intended to commit the crime on the Cimarron River, and a point nearly three hundred miles east of Taos.

In one hour Kit was ready. With ten picked dragoons, finely mounted, and all under his command, they started at a sweeping gallop. The second night out, they came upon a camp of United States dragoons, the officer of which, with twenty men joined Carson to assist in the work of humanity and duty.

Their horses were pressed to the utmost, for time was of the last importance. Kit's directions being implicitly followed, they penetrated the camp of the ruffians and arrested Fox, before he suspected their errand. When he was rescued, Weatherhead and Brevoort were informed of the fearful peril through which they had passed. They were perfectly dumbfounded, but soon saw that they were told nothing but the truth. Fifteen men were picked out by Carson, he being assured that they were innocent, while the other thirty-five were driven ignominiously out of camp.

It was then that the gratitude of the two gentlemen who had been rescued, welled up toward Kit Carson. They offered him a very large sum of money, but Kit modestly declined it, saying that he was amply repaid in having rendered them such an important service. They thanked him over and over again.

In the following Spring, a splendid pair of silver mounted revolvers, appropriately inscribed came to Taos from these two men. They were sent as a testimonial of their gratitude to Kit Carson for his noble act in their behalf.

During the following summer Carson made a journey to the United States, in the way of traffic, and started back in charge of quite a large wagon train.

On his way back, he unexpectedly ran into a large body

of Cheyenne Indians, who at that time were bitterly hostile, although he was unaware of it.

He was not long, however in perceiving the state of the case. The Indians outnumbered his party fifty to one, and they were determined upon massacring all the whites. And yet, so great was the terror inspired by the name of Kit Carson, and so consummately did he manage matters, that the Cheyennes were kept at a safe distance, and the train reached Rayado in safety.

Restless and active as Carson had been from childhood, he worked but a short time on his farm at Rayado, when he decided upon organizing his last trapping expedition. After considerable difficulty he collected eighteen of his old companions,—all of whom were veteran trappers and mountaineers. He took charge as a matter of course, and they decided on one of the longest and boldest routes known to any of them, comprehending some of the largest streams of the Rocky Mountains, and the most dangerous hunting ground of the Indians.

Reaching the South Fork of the River Platte, they trapped down it through the Larame Plains to the New Park, and then on to the Old Park. The hunt was a long and exciting one, and when they returned to Rayado, they were laden down with spoils.

At this time, sheep could be readily purchased in New Mexico at twenty-five cents a head. Learning that there was a great demand for them in California, Carson, with two companions took a drove of six thousand-five-hundred to the new territory. Here he readily sold them for five dollars and a half a piece, making a handsome speculation, with the proceeds of which he returned to his home again.

Shortly after entering the territory of New Mexico, he encountered the Mormon delegation, who informed him that the government had appointed him Indian agent.

He was very much delighted with the appointment, and hastened home to assume its duties; but he had hardly despatched the required bonds to Washington, when Jicarilla Apaches, who came in his agency, became trouble-

some. A company of dragoons were sent out and quite a sharp skirmish took place with them. Afterwards a strong force encamped in the Mountains, within twenty miles of Taos, and Carson paid them a visit, taking with him as a companion, his old friend Buck Backram.

The "talk," resulted in considerable good, although these savages up to the present time are a vindictive and troublesome people.

They became more troublesome than ever, and an expedition was finally organized against them, the commander of which was Col. Cook of the second Regiment of United States Dragoons. This officer selected Kit Carson as his principal guide. Forty Mexicans and Pueblo Indians were also employed as spies and trailers.

The country was found exceedingly rough and difficult to travel; but the expedition persevered, and succeeded in overhauling the guilty red-kins. A bush running fight at once began, in which the savages were decidedly worsted.

Kit Carson now visited Taos in his official capacity and held a conference with the chiefs of the Utahs. They still proving troublesome a third expedition was organized and placed under the command of Major Carleton, who had the sagacity to engage at once Kit Carson as his guide.

They journeyed north a hundred miles, when they reached Fort Massachusetts. Here they halted for a day in order to perfect their arrangements. The commanding officer then divided his force, sending his spy company, under Captain Quinn, to examine the country to the west of White Mountains, while he undertook to inspect the territory on the eastern side.

Captain Quinn and his spies followed up the San Luis valley. When they arrived at Mosco Pass, he turned off through it that they might reach the West Mountain Valley, where it was arranged that he should meet his commanding officer and report progress.

Upon reaching this place, Carson discovered the trail made by three of the enemy, and following it up, found that it joined the main trail near Huezfano Creek. When the other party arrived, a consultation was held, when it

was agreed by the trailers that they were upon the right scent at last.

The pursuit was at once begun, and followed for six days, when the Indian camp was discovered upon Fisher's Peak in the Paton Mountains. They were obliged to scale the precipitous sides of the mountain to reach the enemy, but they did it with such a will, that they came upon them before they could make off with their animals and plunder. Many of them were shot down, and the most of their property was captured from them.

Early in the morning of the day that the Apache village was discovered, Carson examined the trail and remarked to Major Carleton.

"If no accident happens, we shall come up with the enemy by two o'clock."

"If we do," replied the officer, "I will present you with the finest hat that can be purchased in the United States."

Remarkable as it certainly was, it did not vary *ten minutes* from two o'clock when the Apaches were discovered!

As soon as Major Carleton was able to have his commissions executed, he bought a magnificent hat, which was sent to Carson with the following inscription in it.

At two o'clock,

KIT CARSON

from

MAJOR CARLETON.

It was not long after this, that a formidable Indian war broke out. The governor of New Mexico raised five hundred volunteers and placed them under the command of

Colonel St. Vrain, while Colonel Fauntleroy was given the command of all the forces.

In the beginning of 1835, this force with Kit Carson as the principal guide, made its way up the Rio Grande del Norte, where the Indians were encountered and severely punished.

The savages scattered and endeavored to mislead their pursuers by making false trails; but Carson was too old a mountaineer to be deceived and they soon ferreted out the principal Apache village, where a more disastrous defeat awaited them.

Upon the return of the troops to Taos the companies were disbanded, and the Indians sent a delegation to sue for peace. This delegation was ready to make any peace with the whites, and the latter gladly did it. Carson warned them against it, as it could result in no good; but his counsels were unheeded.

But his predictions were verified. The savages became more virulent than ever, and at this very moment, as our readers well know, terrible Indian war is imminent in the west and southwest.



At the breaking out of the Great Civil War, Kit Carson was appointed Colonel of a New Mexican regiment. He served with all the faithful ability which characterized him in every duty that he undertook.

At close of the war, he resumed his duties as Indian agent. In the early part of 1868 his cherished wife died, the blow completely prostrating Carson. A few months later, he also died of the rupture of an artery in the neck, and the two now rest quietly side by side in New Mexico.

Kit Carson died poor, leaving six children behind him, one of whom has been adopted by Lieutenant General Sherman, and there can be no doubt, but that in the community which has received such incalculable services as Carson has given, the remaining children will be well and faithfully cared for.

Buck Beckram, who bears quite a conspicuous part in the early pages of this work, is still living, and we may possibly, at an early date, present a more detailed account of his remarkable adventures.

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